

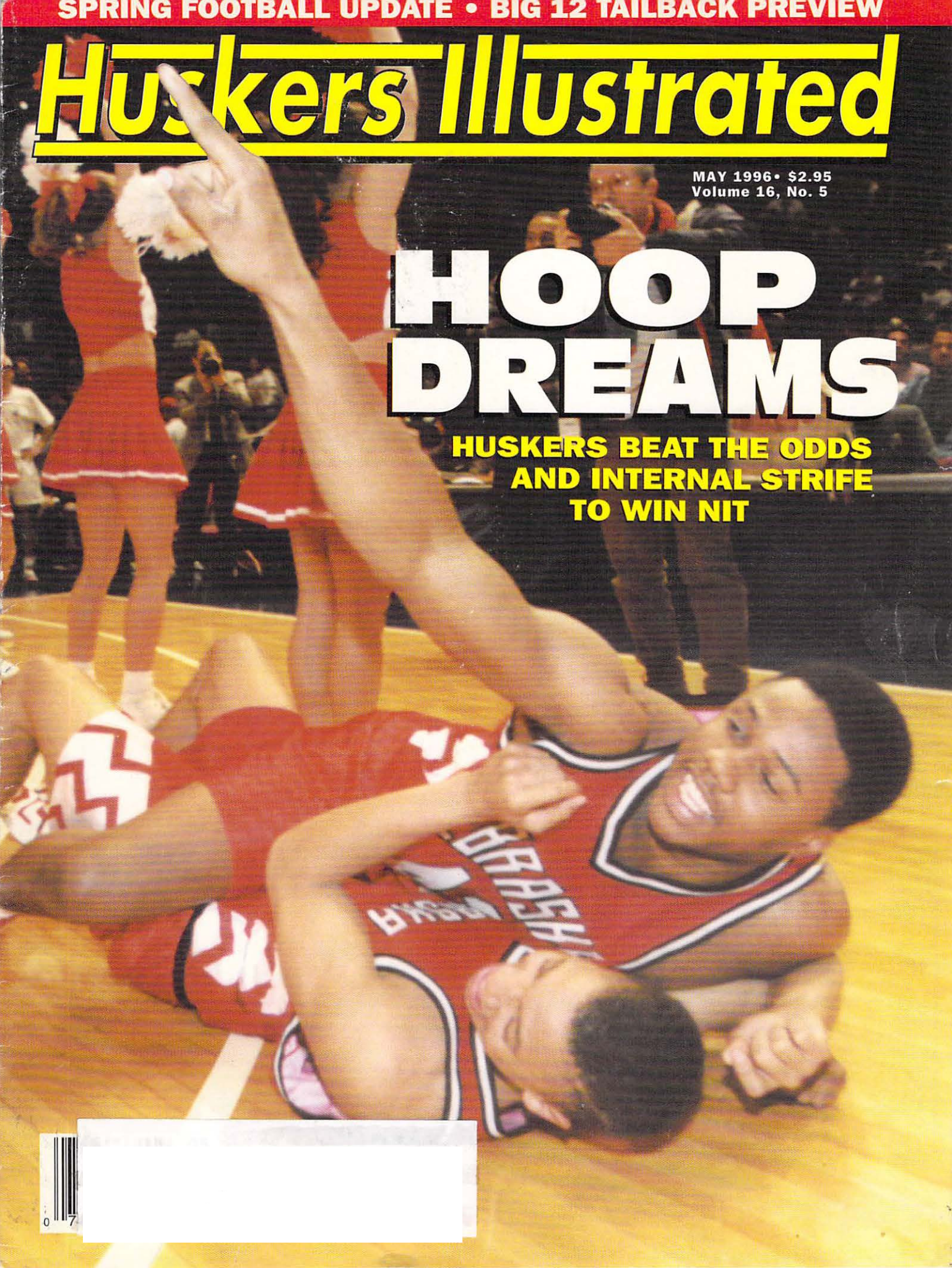
SPRING FOOTBALL UPDATE • BIG 12 TAILBACK PREVIEW

Huskies Illustrated

MAY 1996 • \$2.95
Volume 16, No. 5

HOOP DREAMS

**HUSKERS BEAT THE ODDS
AND INTERNAL STRIFE
TO WIN NIT**



0 7

BACK-TO-BACK NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

Dear Husker Fan:

For the second year in a row, I am proud to say that our Nebraska Huskers were voted the best team in the nation. I hope that our victory over the University of Florida in the Fiesta Bowl was as thrilling for you as it was for me, my staff and the team.

Our 1995 team was simply tremendous. Names that will not soon be forgotten include Benning, Ellis, Green, Graham, Makovicka, Peter, Veland, Tomich, Wistrom, Williams and, of course: Tommie Frazier. Tommie rose to every challenge and overcame every obstacle en route to our second-consecutive national championship.

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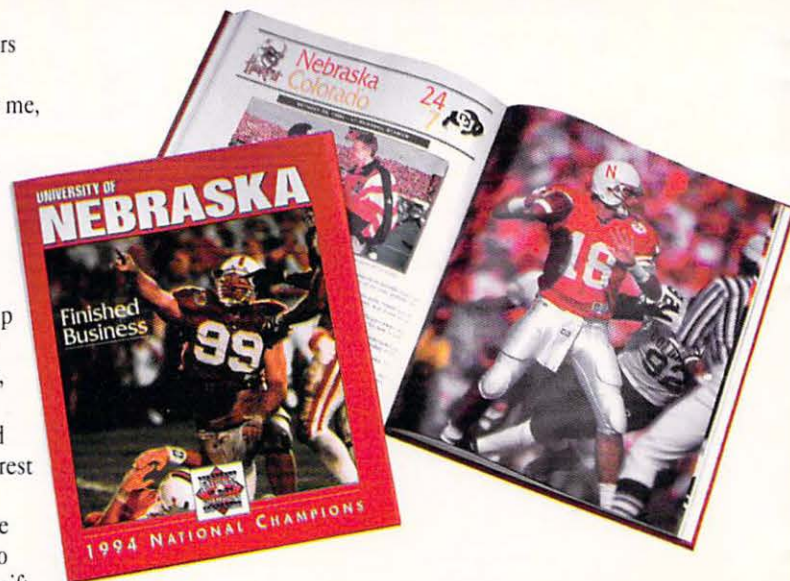
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Tom Osborne
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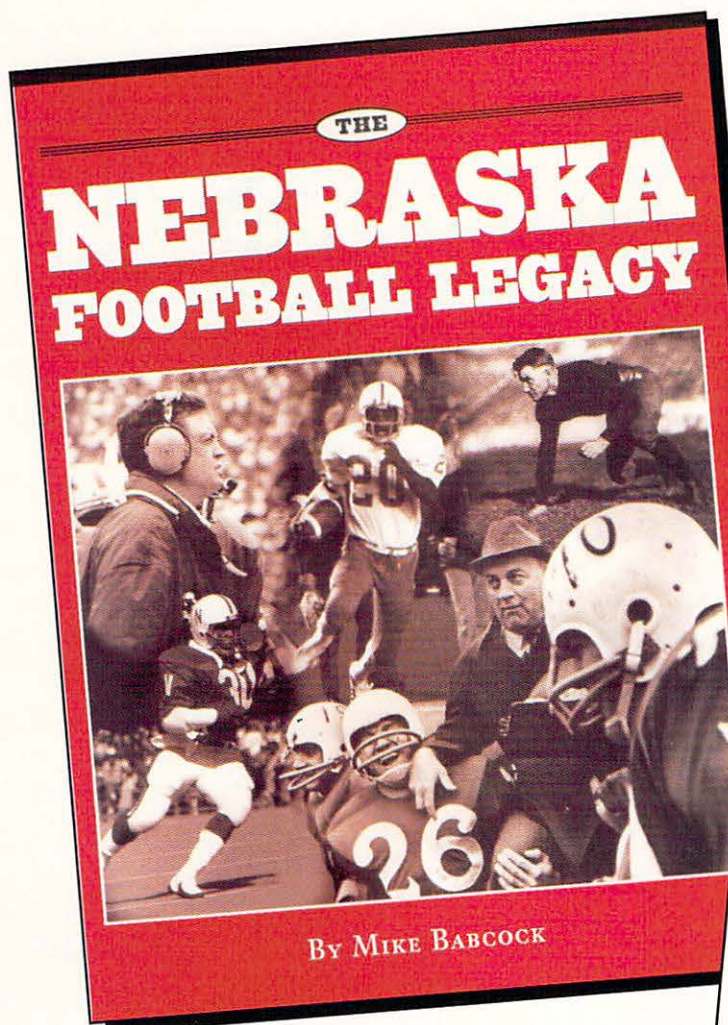
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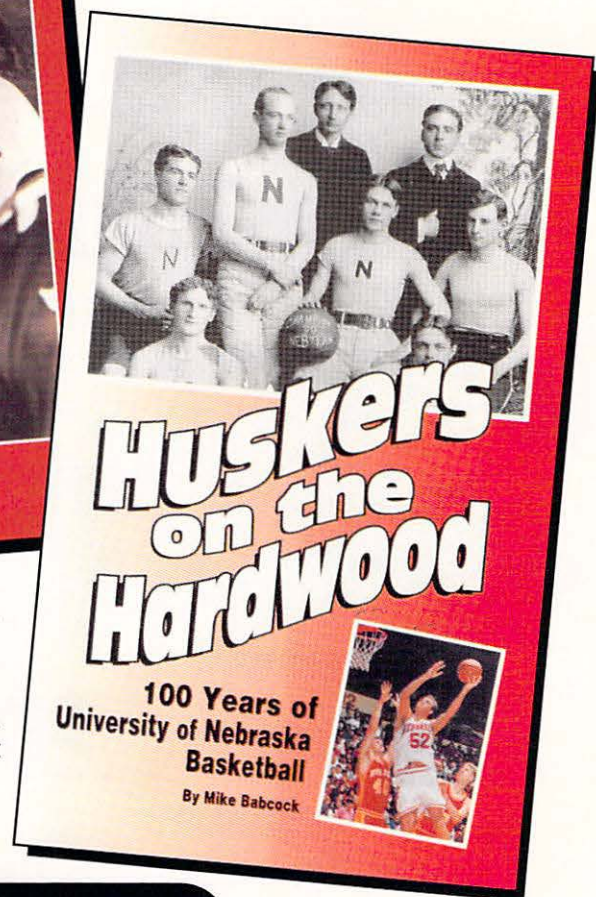
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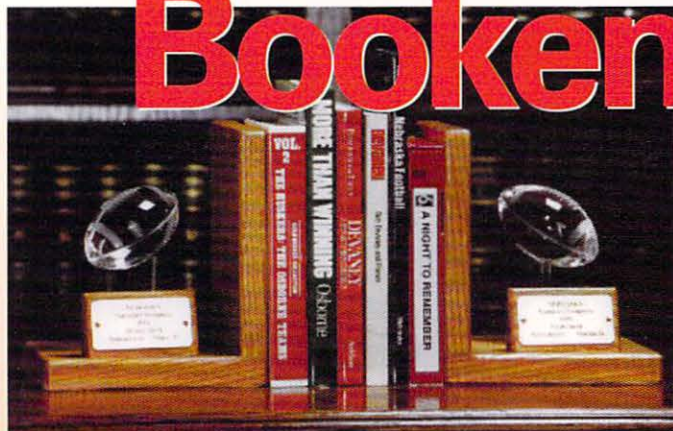
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After learning and excelling at strongside linebacker, Jay Foreman got the call to switch positions this spring.

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Tobin, Thompson and Terry earn third-place finishes following second day disasters at the NCAA Wrestling Tournament.

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Senior Joy Taylor leaves gymnastics and her mark while helping Nebraska to its third-straight Big Eight Championship.

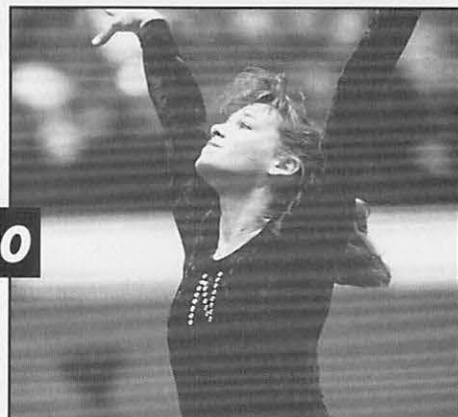
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Running backs alone could fill up the inaugural All-Big 12 team.

By Mike Babcock**20****22**

NEXT ISSUE

Next up is the preseason football annual. We'll preview the Huskers' 1996 season with breakdowns on each position. Look for it in your mailbox or on the newsstands during the first week of June.

ON THE COVER

Tyrone Lue and Terrance Badgett celebrate Nebraska's NIT Championship. By Chris Faytok

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Penny Shines

Nebraska senior Penny Heyns, a native of Amanzimtoti, South Africa, set a word record in the 100-meter breaststroke with a time of 1:07.46 during the preliminaries at the South African Olympic Trials.

She went on to win in the finals of the trials with a time of 1:08.16, securing a place on the 1996 Olympic Team. Fellow Husker and South African native, All-American Julia Russell, also earned a berth on the team by finishing second in the finals with a qualifying time of 1:10.68.

At the NCAA Championships, Heyns became the first Husker swimmer to earn a gold medal. She struck gold in the 100-yard breaststroke with a time of 1:00.27 and finished second in the 200-yard breaststroke.

Russell was the meet's sixth-highest individual scorer finishing third in the 100-yard and 200-yard breaststrokes. Russell also placed fifth in the 200 individual medley.

The NU women's team finished 10th overall at the NAAs. ■

LETTERS

Only at the University of Nebraska could the football and basketball teams win national championships in the same year and the football team score more points than the basketball team. For Gator fans who have forgotten, that was 62 big Tostitos.

Stuart E. Fagan
San Diego, Calif.

I like the moving around of players on the offensive line to make room for Adam Treu on the first unit. However, the same kind of movement should be done in the secondary to make room for hard-hitting Octavious McFarlin at the rover position. Move Mike Minter to free safety and safety Eric Stokes to corner opposite Michael Booker.

Chester T. Hodges
Houston, Texas

Nice to see more coverage on the lesser sports such as wrestling, gymnastics and swimming. Football and basketball are still the best, but as a true Husker, I like to keep up with how our athletic program does from top to bottom. The article on the South African swimmers "Foreign Feel" in last month's issue was a nice touch.

Pamela Burson
St. Louis, Mo.

Erick Strickland at linebacker? A friend of mine told me he heard the basketball/baseball star was going to give football a shot. Is this true?

Paris Townsend
Billings, Mont.

Following the NIT, Strickland (right) informed Tom Osborne that he wanted to give football a shot. If you remember, Strickland talked about trying out for the football team a couple of years ago. With his hoops career over, he has finally gotten his wish. At 6-foot-3, 210 pounds, he would make a solid linebacker, but it looks like Osborne wants to turn him into a wingback or split end. Strickland was a high school first-team All-Nebraska selection as a sophomore and junior playing receiver. But he gave up the sport to concentrate on basketball. — Editor

After reading Mike Babcock's "State of the Huskers" I found myself beginning to hate the Texas schools we've allowed (yes, we invited them) into the conference. It seems to me that the four schools (Texas, Texas A&M, Baylor and Texas Tech) are trying to establish all the rules. By sticking to our guns, Nebraska comes off as the problem school when in fact I see the other former Big Eight schools simply rolling over.

By raising the academic standards for the Big 12 Conference, many kids will be left with no options but junior colleges. As Babcock points out, the majority of the good JUCOs are in Texas. This gives the Lone Star schools and unfair advantage in gaining the top talent after their test scores improve.

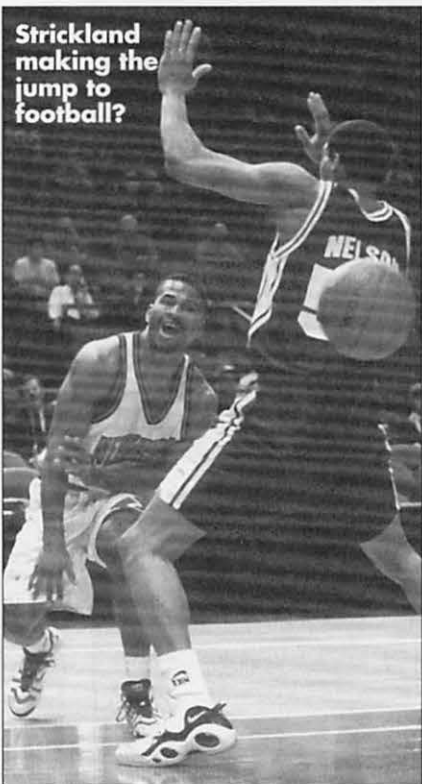
Enough is enough. We need to operate as one conference and not two separates pretending to work toward one goal. This means all the schools need to speak their minds, like Nebraska, and not just roll over to save an argument.

Ted Jennings
Lincoln, Neb.

Please send your comments and questions to **Letters**, P.O. Box 83222, Lincoln, Neb. 68501. Or fax them to us at (214) 851-1720. We reserve the right to edit the letters for clarity, content and length.

For those with electronic mail abilities, huskersedit@xcscx.com.

Strickland making the jump to football?



Chris Foyok

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Authentic autographed balls contain signatures of the 1995 national championship volleyball team (\$50) and the 1995 national championship football team (\$100). Both balls are pre-printed with autographs of every team member and contain the official University championship team logo.

1995 Team Photos

A color team picture, with a printed heading stating the year and the record of each team, is also available. Pictures were taken prior to the start of the season in full uniform. Cost of both the football team photo and volleyball team photo is \$10 each.

Stickers and Pins

Car window stickers and stickers for notebooks and non-weathered materials are available for each championship team. The logo commemorating each championship season is also available as a collar/hat pin. Approximate size of both stickers is 5" x 3 1/2", while the pins are approximately 1" x 1". Stickers are \$1 each, pins are \$5.

HuskerVision Videos

Videos highlighting the Nebraska volleyball and football national championship seasons, as well as the bowl trip are again available as produced by HuskerVision. This is the only video that gets you into the locker room for pre and postgame speeches. Follow the Huskers through their championship seasons. Last year's season highlight tape and national championship videos for football are also available. All videos cost \$20 each.

National Championship Posters

National Championship posters were produced commemorating both the football and volleyball championship seasons. The official championship poster produced by the Husker Athletic Department, is the only one featuring game action photos of the Husker stars. Last year's championship poster and a Tommie Frazier poster, complete with a presigned autograph, are also available.

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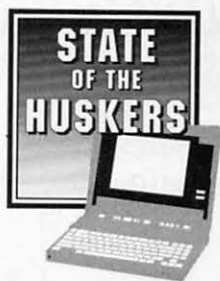
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Improbable, But Appropriate

Losing 10 of its last 11 games Nebraska seemed like anything but champions. Luckily, the Huskers proved that notion wrong



**By
MIKE
BABCOCK**

With 2.2 seconds on the scoreboard clock at storied Madison Square Garden in New York City, Tom Wald hurled the basketball high into the air. When the ball came down, just out of the reach of teammate Tyrone Lue near mid-court, time had expired. And one of the most unusual seasons in the 100 years of Nebraska basketball history had come to an improbable, if not extraordinary, conclusion.

The Cornhuskers defeated St. Joseph's, 60-56, in the championship game of the National Invitation Tournament, capping a five-game winning streak that followed a first-round loss to Iowa State in the final Big Eight Conference Tournament in Kansas City, Mo.

"Was it perfect? Was it pretty?" Coach Danny Nee asked rhetorically, during a post-game, radio interview. "I don't know."

The truth is, the game was neither perfect nor pretty. It was, however, appropriate to a season in which Nebraska won 15 of its first 19 games, then lost 10 of its next 11, including nine in a row.

If the NIT were more selective in extending invitations, the 16-14 Cornhuskers almost certainly wouldn't have received one. But the NIT can't be choosy, not when the NCAA selects 64 for its tournament. So they were given a second chance. And they made the most of it.

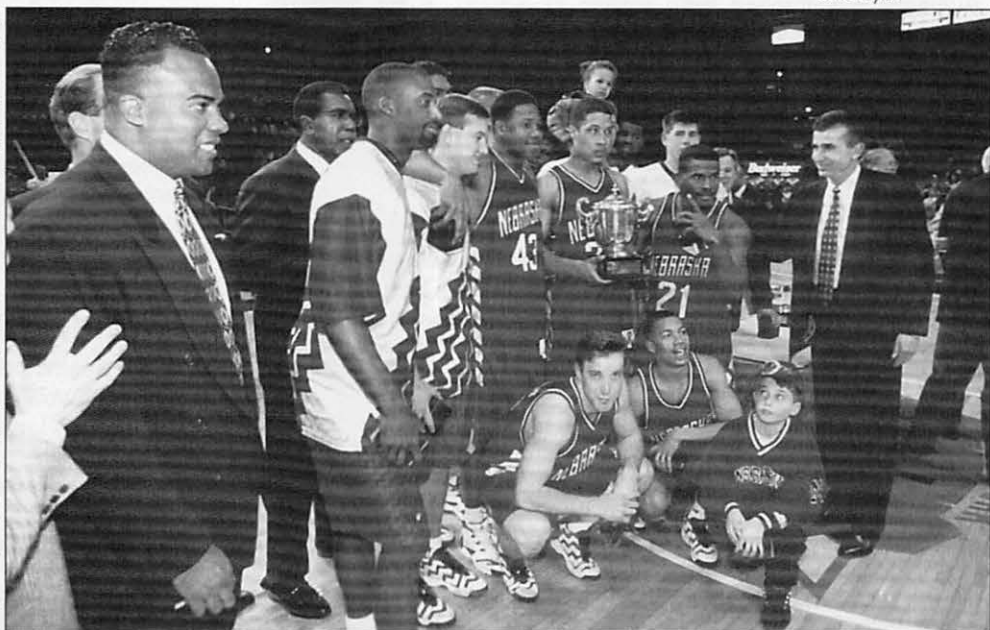
During the five-game NIT run, Nebraska played the way it had been expected to play throughout

Nee's 10th season as head coach, defeating four teams considered to be on the NCAA "bubble" in the process: Colorado State (91-83), Washington State (82-73), Fresno State (83-71) and Tulane (90-78).

The NIT Cornhuskers were erratic at times. But they also were resilient. They were survivors, rising

seventh in the conference, with a 4-10 record. The situation deteriorated to the point that during the losing streak, nine players boycotted practice and went to Athletic Director Bill Byrne to discuss their relationship with Nee. The lines of communication between the players and their coach (as well as each other)

Chris Fayok



For a team that seemed to be in disarray late in the season, winning the NIT was a marvelous achievement.

from the ashes and reconstructing a season they, themselves, had all but destroyed.

They should have finished in the first division of the Big Eight and gone to the NCAA Tournament for a fifth time in six seasons. And they should have won a game or two in the NCAA Tournament, something Nebraska has yet to do. Without question, they had the talent to accomplish those things.

Instead, they duplicated a disappointing 1994-95 season by finishing

were in disrepair.

There were calls for Nee's ouster, and rumors his four-year, rollover contract would be bought out. There were rumors of players transferring, and malicious, personal attacks that have altered the way Nee looks at his position. "This was a wake-up call," said Nee, who once regarded his job as secure.

"Will I be staying (at Nebraska) for a long, long time? I don't think so," he said.

The losing streak brought out the worst in everyone, including some fans.

The paralyzing negative energy of the second half of the season began to dissipate with each NIT victory, however. By the time the

"WAS IT PERFECT? WAS IT PRETTY?"

Cornhuskers earned a trip to New York City by winning at Fresno State in the quarterfinals, the excitement of the title chase had pushed much of the pettiness aside.

The most exuberant fans celebrated the NIT championship by claiming it was Nebraska's first "national" title in basketball. The most cynical dismissed the hard-earned title with: "It's only the NIT." The truth was somewhere in between — if anything, shaded more to the former than to the latter.

The NCAA Tournament doesn't include the nation's 64 best teams. That's a naive notion. Central Florida and San Jose State took losing records into the NCAA's first round. And those are only the most extreme examples of what can happen when the NCAA guarantees bids to selected conference champions.

Realistically, a last-place team from one of the nation's top basketball conferences has more business in the NCAA Tournament than the champions of some of the conferences with automatic bids. So it's unfair to suggest that the proper chant for winning the NIT is: "We're No. 65."

If the NCAA Tournament field were limited to, say, 32 teams, selected on the basis of a power rating with no automatic bids, then such numbers might matter. As it is, they do not.

An even better NCAA Tournament format would be one in which every team participated, beginning with regionals aligned geographically. That, of course, isn't likely to happen.

No one is suggesting by winning the NIT, Nebraska belongs in the company of Kentucky, Massachusetts, Syracuse and Mississippi State — though, you might recall, the Cornhuskers played Mississippi State to a three-point game (69-66) in the Far West Classic in late December.

Mississippi State wasn't playing particularly well at the time. The Bulldogs started the Southeastern Conference season poorly before putting things together. It is all relative.

In any context, winning a 32-team, national tournament constitutes a remarkable achievement, deserving of respect. The Cornhuskers did it. Their NIT trophy is real.

There should be no footnote, no: "Yes, but . . ." ■



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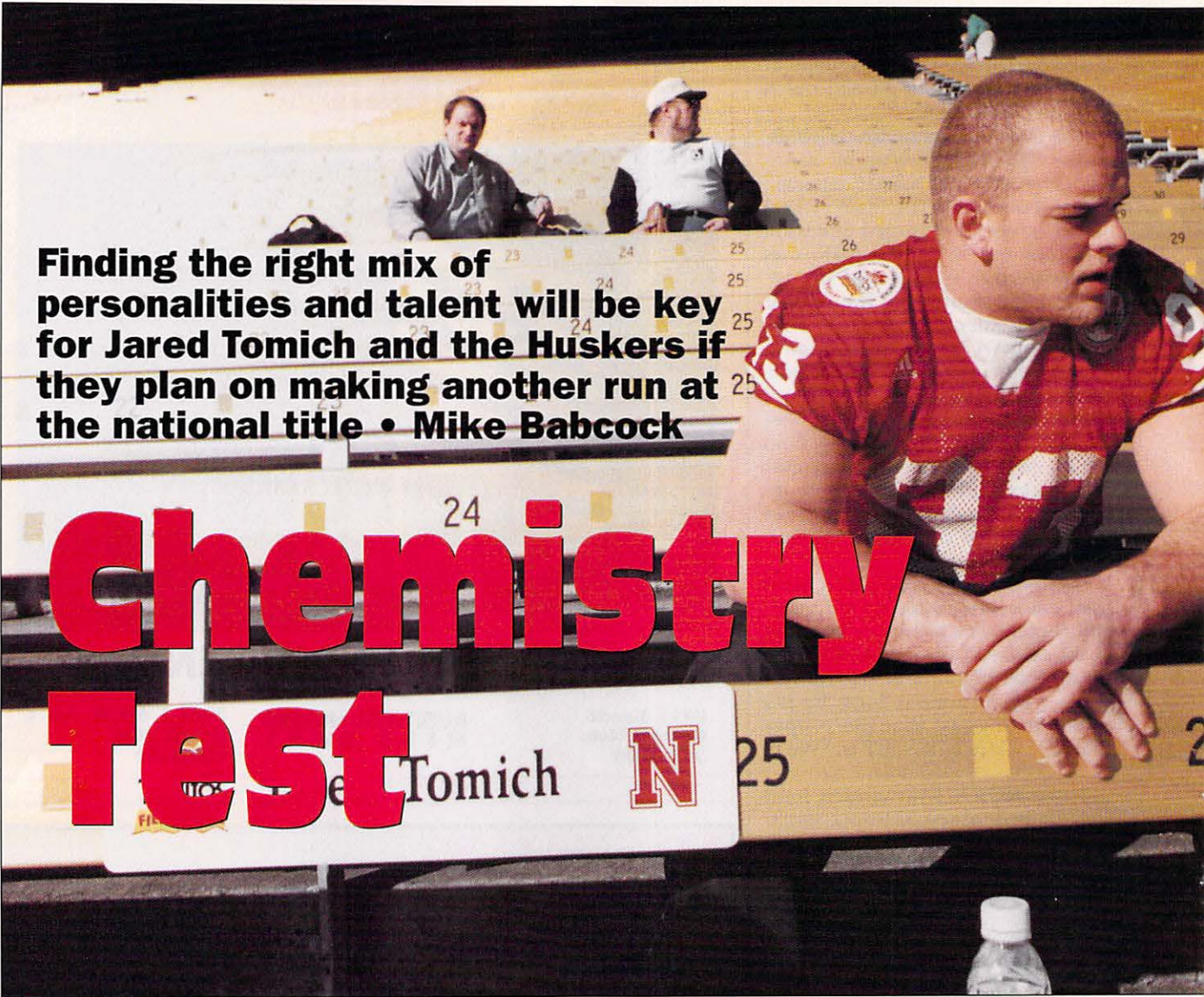
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Finding the right mix of personalities and talent will be key for Jared Tomich and the Huskers if they plan on making another run at the national title • Mike Babcock

Chemistry Test

There can be no margin for error as the Nebraska football team prepares to make a run at an unprecedented third consecutive national championship. For some fans, perhaps even many, success has been reduced to winning a third title, anything else constituting failure.

As a result, the Cornhuskers will walk a fine line in 1996.

Even so, the pressure of such expectations wasn't out of the ordinary during spring practice, according to outside linebacker Jared Tomich, a senior to whom the team will look for leadership in 1996.

"It's in the back of your mind," Tomich said on the Saturday before the spring intrasquad game. "You think about it. We're pumped up to win a third title. It comes up in conversations. Nobody has ever done that before. It's hard to win one, let alone three, with all the great (col-

lege) players."

Without a doubt, Nebraska has the players to win a third championship.

But winning a national title also requires luck, good health and attitude, which helped to differentiate the 1994 and 1995 Cornhuskers from the nation's other outstanding teams. In addition to talent, Nebraska has had forceful personalities, whose determination and will to win was extraordinary.

Tommie Frazier was such a player, as were Aaron Graham and Christian Peter. And there were others, whose departure has left a void that can't be filled by athletic ability alone.

Tomich, who earned first-team All-America recognition last season, is ready to accept leadership responsibilities. "I don't necessarily see myself in that role, but I hope to be," he said.

"With Christian (Peter) and Tony Veland, we had guys who were leaders by their motivation. And there are quite a few guys like that on defense now . . . Mike Minter, Michael Booker, Jamel Williams, Terrell Farley. The offense is pretty young. We'll see who steps up there. But we'll have good leadership."

Tomich will be a good leader, if for no other reason than by the example he has set. He walked on from Lake Central High School in St. John, Ind., and sat out his first year at Nebraska because he hadn't met NCAA freshman eligibility requirements. He was, in his own words, a "Prop 48."

That first year was difficult. But "I was over here all the time, lifting," Tomich said. "I'd usually make it for the second half of practice to watch the team work and get razed by Christian Peter."

Tomich couldn't participate in



Michael Chow

practices, of course. All he could do was watch. "I couldn't even have a T-shirt with 'Nebraska' on it," he said. Not a team-issue T-shirt, anyway.

The rules were written in such a way that Prop 48s couldn't even feel like they were a part of the team. But Tomich, who expected to be a defensive tackle then, made it through with the help of Peter, Kevin Ramaekers and John Parrella. Peter and Ramaekers had to gain their eligibility in the same way.

"They all helped me get through the tough times," Tomich said.

So did defensive coordinator Charlie McBride, who would have been Tomich's position coach if he had remained a defensive tackle. "Coach McBride was really big on my list," said Tomich.

"He told me, 'If you screw up once, you're going home.' And I was just a walk-on. He put pressure on

me. He told me to come see him twice a week to let him know how my grades were."

McBride's tough stance was evidence that he wanted Tomich to succeed. Tomich was further convinced of McBride's support when he was given a scholarship after redshirting in the fall of 1993. Getting the scholarship was "a big deal. It told me I was doing something right," Tomich said.

Bob Berry

"I didn't feel like I deserved a scholarship, but I wanted to earn one."

That was nearly three years ago. But "it seems like yesterday," said Tomich, who is preparing for his final collegiate season with the same determination that characterized his first two years. He improved in every area in post-winter conditioning tests and will be stronger and faster in 1996.

Tomich dropped his 40-yard dash time from 4.98 to 4.82. He dropped his 10-yard dash time from 1.71 to 1.62. And he increased his vertical jump (a measure of explosiveness) 4.5 inches. "I've been working on my run defense. I wanted to get a step better, improve wherever I could," he said.

His improvements were such that he was chosen as the team's Lifter of the Year.

Nearly everyone on the team has been similarly dedicated, according to Tomich.

The offense was showing steady improvement in the spring, as indicated by the third Saturday scrimmage. Scott Frost, Frazier's likely

Early spring injuries clouded Osborne's outlook, but he seems to have found a team with a lot of heart as well as talent.

successor at quarterback, demonstrated his running ability, gaining 101 yards and scoring a touchdown (on a 29-yard run) on 10 carries.

Tomich was impressed by Frost, who will be a junior, during the spring. "He likes to stick his nose in

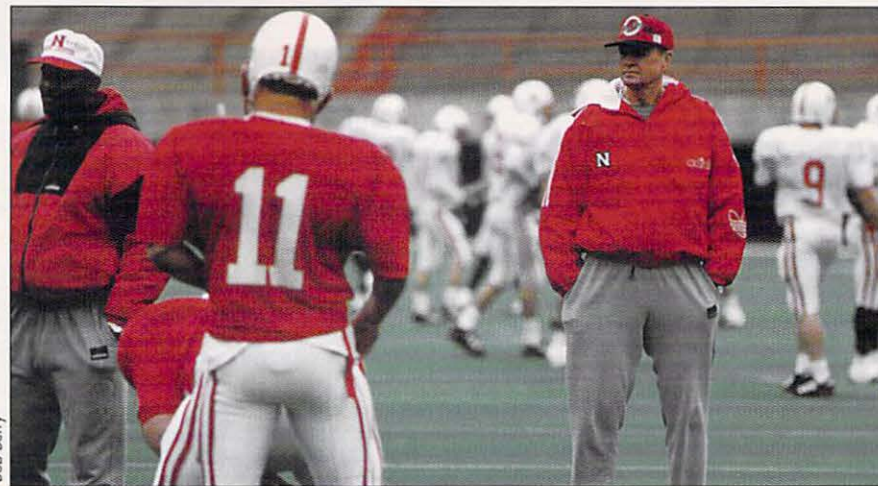
Grant Wistrom (98) and Adam Treu (77) found time for horseplay, but when the whistle blew, it was all business this spring.



there. He'll take a hit," Tomich said. "I think the offensive line is blocking better, and the whole offense is executing its plays better. It seems like everybody on offense is stepping up."

I-back Ahman Green, a sophomore-to-be, also looked good during the third scrimmage, rushing for 101 yards and one touchdown on 12 carries. He nearly broke loose for a touchdown on the first carry of the scrimmage, gaining 40 yards before being knocked out of bounds. "We've got a really good offense," McBride said. "I don't think anybody's going to shut them down, not even us."

Nebraska's offense could receive no greater compliment. The



Bob Berry

Cornhusker defense should be exceptional in 1996, assuming everyone is healthy come fall. The positions on defense at which there were questions going into the spring were beset by injuries. Cornerbacks Mike Fullman and Leslie Dennis both were sidelined much of the time, and Jerome Peterson joined them for a time.

In addition, Scott Saltsman and Larry Townsend, the backups to defensive tackles Jason Peter and Jeff Ogard were lost for the spring because of injuries. That provided opportunities for Jason Wiltz, who will be a sophomore, and some young tackles, such as Brandon Drum and Derek Allen.

Drum and Allen, who are probably a year away from playing a lot if Saltsman and Townsend return, "are over-matched against our offensive line. But they're getting to go against people who are the best they'll see. It's the same with the (young players in the) secondary. And that's helping us to develop depth faster than usual," McBride said, adding, "The better our depth is, the better this defense will be."

Tomich is one of nine defensive

players with starting experience. The others are Farley, Booker, Minter, Jason Peter, Grant Wistrom, Jay Foreman, Ryan Terwilliger and Eric Stokes. That's a solid base for the defense, which is potentially as good as Nebraska has had. Tomich was

When we come out, we're playing for Coach Osborne as well as ourselves. Not every team is like that. It's kind of like a big family.

**— Jared Tomich
All-American candidate**

pleased with what he saw during the spring. "I think we're better than we expected," he said. "We're executing better."

Beneath his shoulder pads and jersey that particular afternoon, Tomich wore a gray, sleeveless T-shirt, which featured a picture of Dick Butkus, the Chicago Bears' Hall of Fame linebacker.

"Butkus never wore an earring," said words on the T-shirt.

In a lower front corner of the T-shirt was the word: "Throwbacks."

Tomich is a throwback, not only in his no-nonsense, tough-minded approach to the game but also in the way he came to Nebraska and earned his place on the field. With changes in NCAA and Big 12 rules, "Prop 48s" will be relegated to junior colleges. "Guys like me are gone," said Tomich. "Jamel (Williams), Michael Booker... who knows where we'd be now? We wouldn't be playing football."

The Cornhuskers stuck by them, and that has produced a unique closeness on the team, according to Tomich. It might sound corny, but "everybody cares for each other on the team," he said.

"One of the most important things we have is, everyone wants to play for his coach, not just their position coach but Coach Osborne, too. When we come out, we're playing for Coach Osborne as well as for ourselves. Not every team is like that. It's kind of like a big family."

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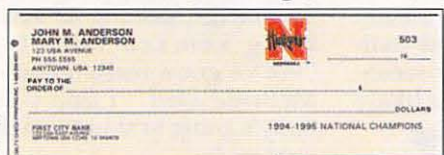
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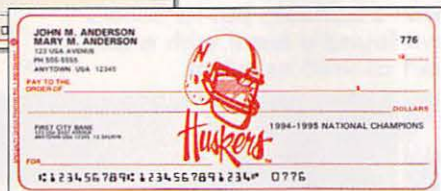
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Catching On

Multi-talented athlete, Kenny Cheatham has become a rising star this spring

A small group of Nebraska basketball players, including Bernard Garner and Venson Hamilton, shouted at Kenny Cheatham from the southwest corner of Memorial Stadium, where they had settled in to watch a spring football scrimmage. Someone would yell at Cheatham, then they would all laugh.

"I heard them," Cheatham said after practice a couple of days later. "I get along with a lot of the basketball team. They always want me to come over to the Rec Center to see what I'm about (as a basketball player). I tell them I want them to come out and try playing football with us. They're always telling me how great they were in Pop Warner (football)."

Cheatham smiled. He might meet them at the Rec Center someday and show them what he can do on a basketball court. He might even go out for the Cornhusker basketball team before he completes his eligibility. He might have by now, in fact, if things had worked out a little differently.

Coach Danny Nee almost certainly would give the 6-foot-4, 210-pound Cheatham a look. Cheatham was recruited as a basketball player at South Mountain High School in Phoenix, Ariz. Kansas, Texas-El Paso, Alabama and Villanova, as well as Arizona State and Arizona were among the schools interested in him for his basketball skills, according to Cheatham, a two-time all-state basketball player who averaged 21 points per game as a senior in Arizona's large-school class.

Cheatham's decision came down to football and basketball, however. "It was hard," he said. "But I started thinking about the long run. Basketball is so political. You have to go to camps.

"It's more individual. In football, you have a better opportunity to show what you can do, as a team player. It was more of a life decision (picking football) for me."

His high school football coach, Cleveland Dansby, told him the potential future rewards were greater in football than in basketball, Cheatham said. "He told me there were a lot of 6-4 basketball players in college and the NBA. But there weren't a lot of 6-4 receivers who could catch and run like me.

"People say I can be a Michael Irvin-type of receiver."

Early last season, he was involved in the rotation as the No. 3 split end and he returned punts and kickoffs. In five games, he caught four passes for 31 yards and returned eight punts for an average of 12.8 yards per return — second on the team behind Mike Fullman, who averaged 13.6 yards on 21 returns.

Cheatham, who will be a sophomore in the fall, was among several young players who showed signs of being ready to step up during the spring. Junior Shevin Wiggins, his roommate, was another.

Garner was messing with him during the second Saturday scrimmage of the spring, particularly after he made an acrobatic catch along the west sideline, diving and taking the ball away from the defender.

"Catches like that were pretty natural for me (in high school)," Cheatham said. "The majority of things we do here are the same as what we did in high school. They just didn't have to be as sharp in high school. Now it's like, you need to do it. In high school, you just made those catches for fun." ■



Cheatham was the No. 3 split end last year before going down to injury.

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STUCK IN T

After learning and excelling at strongside linebacker, Jay Foreman got the call to switch positions this spring

Jay Foreman tried to recall the process by which he had moved from strongside linebacker to middle linebacker. He stood beneath the south stands at Memorial Stadium, following Nebraska's second Saturday scrimmage of spring football practice.

Had he suggested the switch in positions?

Or had he been asked to move?

Foreman thought about it for a moment.

"I don't remember for sure," he said. "It's like that happened a long time ago."

He paused again, as if deep in thought. Then, perhaps for want of something better to say, Foreman concluded his inexact recollection. "I'm getting old," he said with a smile.

Old? Foreman just celebrated his 20th birthday in mid-February.

The demands of winning consecutive national championships are considerable, however. They tend to exact a physical and emotional toll on just about everyone associated with the team. So, despite his obvious youth, Foreman could be correct in his perception of the aging process.

Foreman was Nebraska's starting strongside linebacker as a redshirted freshman last season. He started every game, in fact, finishing with 32 tackles. Few young players achieve such immediate success. A premium is placed on experience. But there was a need, and Foreman showed he could fill it.

That was then, however, and this is now. At Nebraska, there is no time for complacency.

"I was in a comfort zone at SAM

(strongside linebacker)," Foreman said. "Now, I have to basically learn the whole defense in three weeks. It's hard. I'm not in a comfort zone anymore."

The way Foreman remembers it (taking into consideration the uncertainty described earlier) coach Tom Osborne suggested the switch in positions in January. "He ran it by me, and I decided I would try it," Foreman said. "You kind of have to say yes when they ask you something like that."

Ultimately, the question of whether or not he was going to change positions didn't depend on his answer. At least, that's what he concluded. Osborne wouldn't have asked, otherwise.

The reason for Foreman's relocation was two-fold. For one thing, the Cornhusker defensive coaches wanted to get their best athletes on the field. That could mean having Foreman and Jamel Williams on the field at the same time. Williams was Foreman's back-up last season.

Even though he never started, Williams was playing more than Foreman by season's end. He was especially valuable defending pass-oriented teams because of his speed. Williams, who ran 4.51 in the 40-yard dash during pre-spring testing, was a sprinter for the Cornhusker track team.

Foreman isn't slow. He has dropped his 40 time from 4.71 to 4.66.

But he's not quite as fast as Williams, who finished his junior season with 47 tackles, including six for losses, totaling 27 yards, and one sack. He forced a fumble and intercepted a pass, which he returned 36



yards for a touchdown against Oklahoma. And he broke up two more passes.

Another factor in Foreman's position switch was the departure of Phil Ellis and Doug Colman, who alternated at middle linebacker on the back-to-back national championship teams. "I'd venture to say you'll see something like that this fall," said linebackers coach Craig Bohl.

Jon Hesse, a senior-to-be, went into spring practice as Nebraska's only experienced middle linebacker. Among several other candidates at the position were redshirted scholarship freshmen Julius Jackson and Kareem Sears, as well as sophomore walk-ons Adam Skoda and Quint

"I WAS IN A COMFORT ZONE AT SAM. I'

HE MIDDLE



Hogrefe.

Foreman's ability to take on blockers "and not lose vision of the ball carrier" makes him well-suited to play middle linebacker, according to Bohl. "With the skills Jay has, we think it's going to be a great position for him, not only this year but in the future," Bohl said.

Foreman might have been a little discouraged, realizing he would have to start all over at a more demanding position, based on the number of things he would have to learn. "At SAM, there's just one person's job to know. But at MIKE (middle linebacker), you have to know what everyone else is supposed to do — the (defensive) tackle, the nose

(tackle), the guys up-front," he said.

The middle linebacker is like a defensive quarterback, according to Foreman, making certain those around him are properly aligned. The position is one of much responsibility.

Foreman was encouraged by his dad, former Minnesota Vikings running back Chuck Foreman, to look at the positive aspect of his being asked to switch positions. "He told me: 'If they want you to move, they must think you'll do a good job.' But he knows how hard I am on myself," Jay said.

"I'm just too stubborn, I guess. Nobody's perfect."

Foreman was driven to be perfect

at his new position and do so, a fact that caused him a great deal of frustration during the first two weeks of spring practice.

As a middle linebacker, Foreman must assert himself more than before. "MIKE has to make the check calls," he said. "At first, I was a little hesitant. But now if I see something, I can make the call."

Many things haven't changed, of course. For example, Foreman has to beware of huge offensive linemen intent on mayhem. During the second Saturday scrimmage, guard Chris Dishman looped around to make a block on Foreman from the blindside. Dishman, who was moved from tackle to guard in the spring, weighs 310 pounds — some 85 pounds more than Foreman's listed weight.

Actually, he weighs a little less than 225, Foreman said. By the end of last season, he weighed about 217. Either way, it didn't matter in his collision with Dishman. Foreman was flattened.

The embarrassment of being knocked off his feet by Dishman was counterbalanced earlier in the scrimmage when Foreman intercepted a Scott Frost screen pass and returned it 66 yards for a touchdown. At the end of the run, Foreman went into a Deion Sanders' stride then fired the ball at the screen below the north stadium stands after he crossed the goal line. His exuberant behavior drew a penalty flag.

And, yes, he was reprimanded by the coaches for his unseemly behavior at the end of the run. Such behavior is out of character for Foreman, whose demeanor is reserved.

When Nebraska recruited him, "I didn't know for sure I would play defense until I got here," said Foreman, who was a running back on the prep level. "They told me it would be either or. I think. I don't remember for sure."

That seems like such a long time ago. ■

I NOT IN A COMFORT ZONE ANYMORE."



Instant Impact

Many of Tom Osborne's latest class will have little time to settle into college life before seeing playing action

By JAMES HALE

Winning back-to-back national titles (and almost a third) as Nebraska has, it would be easy to think there wouldn't be much opportunity for a true freshman to play. Nebraska is such a dominant program that one would think upperclassmen fill every slot and all players must wait their respective turns.

That's very true in some spots. But in reality, one of the reasons why Nebraska is the most dominate college football program in the country is it plays the best players period. No matter the age, classification or background.

Head coach Tom Osborne has always been open-minded about playing true freshmen and has never hesitated to play a first-year man if the player has ability.

"It doesn't make any sense not to play a first year player if he's the best player we have at a certain position or if he's good enough to play on our second unit," Osborne said. "We do get into situations where we have so much depth at one position that if a player isn't starting, but could be our backup, we go ahead and redshirt that player realizing our depth will hold up and that player could be a four-year starter."

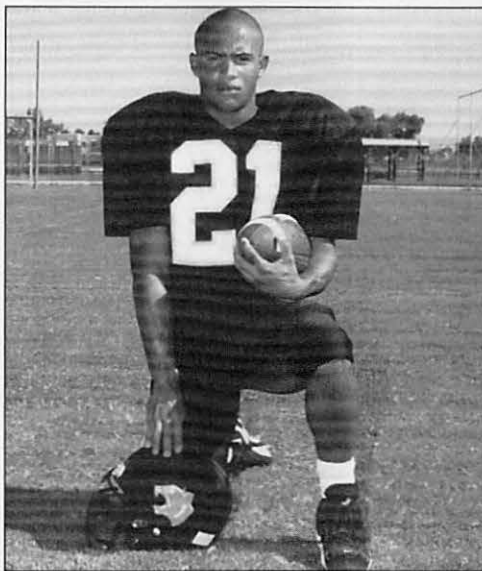
"We want to put our best team on the field, and if that means playing a freshman at a certain position. I think it's more likely that a freshman would play in the skill position then in the downlines. But on defense we sometimes see a young player like Grant Wistrom come up and show the maturity to play early."

That thinking certainly can't hurt the Huskers in recruiting. In fact, it's a boost. The great prep players feel they can play early, and they want to know if they are the best player on the field. If so their eligibility classification won't be held against them."

That ideal held true with Tommie Frazier, Lawrence Phillips and

Ahman Green. All-American Will Shields was one of the few exceptions in the offensive line.

"I think this year, the best chance a freshman has to break into our lineup would be in the secondary," said recruiting coordinator Steve Pederson. "That's really hard to gauge, because of our injury situation. Injuries can change things for any team in a hurry, and a position where we may feel we have great depth and a solid starter right now can all of a sudden become a posi-



Mike Brown is one of the 1996 recruiting class expected to provide immediate help this fall.

tion where a freshman has to start. However, right now, I would say it's in the secondary where a true freshman could earn a start and will certainly have to help us with depth."

To that end, the Huskers are loaded like no other college program in the country.

Three of the top 10 defensive backs in the nation inked with Nebraska, and all three have the talent and potential to play early.

Mike Brown, Ralph Brown and Robert Pollard have the talent to play if needed. In fact, it's a good bet that one of the Browns will be the starting right cornerback where

Mike Fullman is struggling with academics and Leslie Dennis with knee problems.

Eric Johnson can't work out until the fall due to his Prop 42 status, but he is another talented defensive back who could figure into the picture. John Gibson and J.R. Edwards could also figure into the secondary picture or at wide receiver.

Luis Almanzar has switched over from tight end to the defensive line after beefing up to 255 pounds. He has given coaches the impression he can help early in his career.

With Scott Frost establishing himself as the starting quarterback and Frankie London as the backup, Clint Finley won't be needed as a freshman quarterback. However, Finley is a great athlete and could be used in the secondary.

It is possible that DeAngelo Evans will earn some playing time at tailback behind Green, James Sims and Damon Benning who are currently locked in as the top three.

Of course, the Huskers will be looking to sign more running backs in their 1997 class and one of the best in the country plays at Englewood (Cherry Creek), Colo. **Darnell McDonald** (5-foot-11, 190 pounds, 4.4) and rushed for 2,561 yards and 33 touchdowns last season. He is drawing comparisons to Indianapolis Colts star Marshall Faulk.

Rohan Davey (6-3, 200, 4.7) of Hialeah (Miami Lakes), Fla., is drawing the early nod as the nation's top quarterback recruit after throwing for 1,606 yards and 21 touchdowns last season. Davey has been compared to Florida State's Danny Kanell. **Reggie Germany** (6-2, 190, 4.5) of St. Louis (Hazelwood East), Mo., is the early choice at wide receiver after grabbing 38 passes for 999 yards and 19 touchdowns.

You can bet the Huskers already have a head start in the Germany recruiting sweepstakes after recruiting and signing defensive tackle David Webber from the same school a year ago. ■

1996 SPRING TWO DEEP

OFFENSE

SE	5	BRENDAN HOLBEIN***	5-9	190	Sr	(9)
	14	Lance Brown*	5-11	190	So	
	89	Jeff Lake*	6-4	205	Jr	
LT	77	Adam Treu**	6-6	300	Sr	
	73	Fred Pollack**	6-4	305	Jr	
LG	75	CHRIS DISHMAN***	6-3	310	Sr	(12)
	68	James Sherman	6-2	305	Fr	
C	67	AARON TAYLOR**	6-1	305	Jr	(12)
	53	Matt Vrzal**	6-1	300	Sr	
RG	64	Jon Zatechka**	6-2	290	Jr	
	62	Matt Hoskinson*	6-1	280	So	
RT	70	ERIC ANDERSON**	6-4	300	Jr	(12)
	78	Kory Mikos**	6-5	295	Sr	
TE	90	TIM CARPENTER**	6-3	250	Jr	(2)
	88	Sheldon Jackson*	6-4	250	So	
	34	Vershan Jackson*	6-0	245	Jr	
QB	11	Matt Turman**	5-11	185	Sr	
	7	Scott Frost	6-3	215	Jr	
	9	Monte Christo	6-0	195	So	
	1	Frankie London	6-0	170	Fr	
	18	Jeff Perino	6-2	195	Fr	
FB	28	Brian Schuster**	5-11	225	Sr	
	45	Joel Makovicka*	5-11	230	So	
	40	Billy Legate*	5-11	215	So	
IB	30	AHMAN GREEN*	6-0	210	So	(6)
	21	DAMON BENNING***	5-11	210	Sr	(2)
	31	James Sims*	6-1	215	Jr	
WB	25	JON VEDRAL**	5-11	205	Sr	(1)
	33	Sean Wieting	5-9	190	Jr	
-or-	29	Shevin Wiggins	5-11	180	So	
-or-	14	Lance Brown*	5-11	190	So	
PK	35	KRIS BROWN*	5-10	200	So	(12)
	13	Ted Retzlaff*	6-0	190	Jr	

DEFENSE

LRUSH	93	JARED TOMICH**	6-2	260	Sr	(12)
	57	Chad Kelsay*	6-3	230	So	
	92	Travis Toline*	6-3	235	Fr	
DT	97	Jeff Ogard**	6-6	300	Sr	
	74	Scott Saltsman**	6-2	270	Sr	
DT	95	JASON PETER**	6-4	285	Jr	(12)
	99	Jason Wiltz	6-3	295	So	
RRUSH	98	Grant Wistrom**	6-5	250	Jr	(12)
	84	Mike Rucker*	6-6	250	So	
SAM	28	Jamel Williams**	6-2	205	Sr	
	41	Tony Ortiz	6-0	205	Fr	
-or-	81	Larry Arnold*	6-4	240	Sr	
-or-	#46	Brian Shaw	6-1	215	Fr	
MIKE	56	JAY FOREMAN*	6-1	225	So	(12)
-or-	44	Jon Hesse**	6-4	250	Sr	
WILL	43	TERRELL FARLEY*	6-1	205	Sr	(6)
	91	RYAN TERWILLIGER***	6-5	225	Sr	(6)
LCB	20	MICHAEL BOOKER**	6-2	205	Sr	(10)
	17	Chad Blahak*	5-9	190	Sr	
	48	Dave Alderman*	5-10	190	Sr	
RCB	12	Mike Fullman*	5-7	170	Sr	
	2	Leslie Dennis**	5-8	185	Jr	
	26	Jerome Peterson	5-7	185	Fr	
ROV	10	MIKE MINTER***	5-10	190	Sr	(12)
	4	Octavious McFarlin**	5-11	190	Jr	
	39	Mike Roberts*	6-1	185	Sr	
FS	16	ERIC STOKES***	5-11	185	Sr	(2)
	3	Eric Warfield*	6-1	195	Jr	
	32	Eric Walther*	6-0	175	So	
	#25	Jeff Wells	6-1	200	Fr	
P	19	JESSE KOSCH*	6-0	185	Jr	(11)
	23	Bill Laffeur*	5-11	200	Fr	
	35	Kris Brown*	5-10	200	So	

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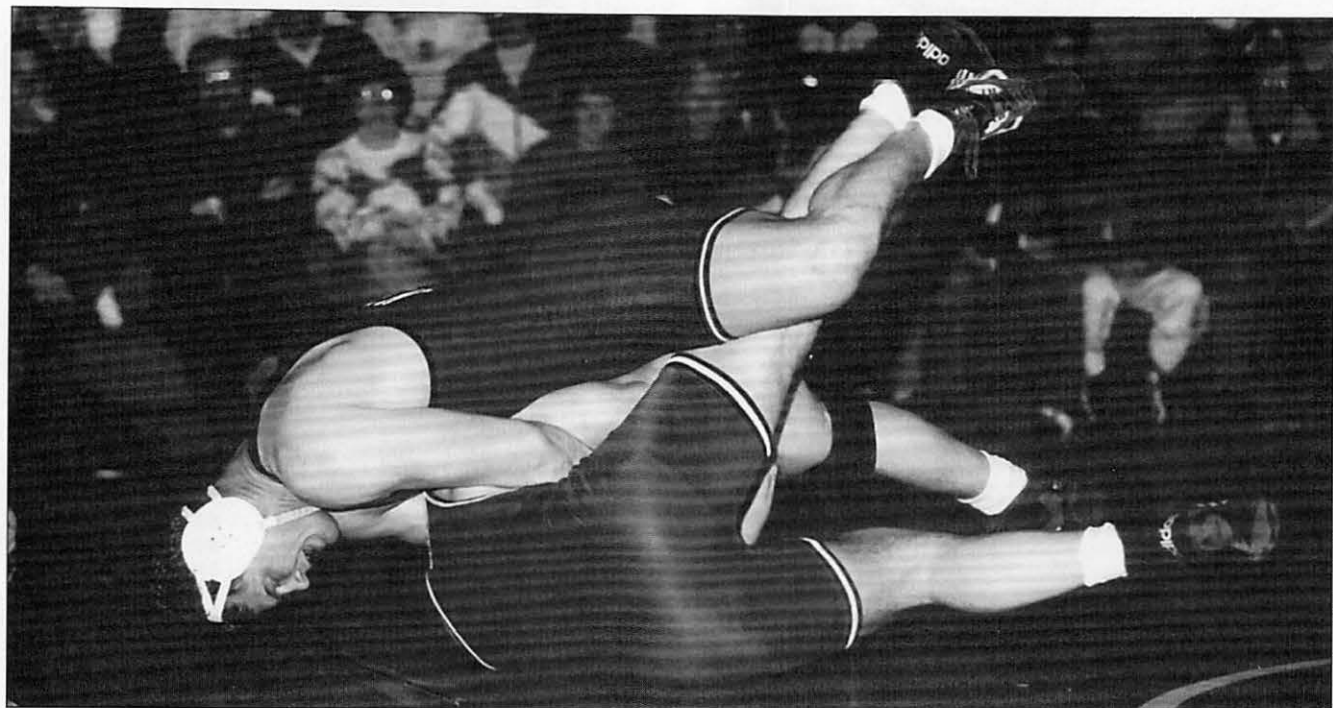
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Thrice Is Nice

Tobin, Thompson and Terry earn third-place finishes following second day disasters

Nebraska coach Tim Neumann won't forget the second day of the NCAA Wrestling Championships for a long time. But he's trying. Hard.

During that fateful day, three of Neumann's wrestlers, who all figured to contend for national titles and keep Nebraska in the running for the team championship, were defeated in the semifinals at the Target Center in Minneapolis.

But heavyweight Tolly Thompson, 190-pounder Ryan Tobin and Temoer Terry at 158 pounds all rebounded from semifinal losses to earn third-place finishes.

Thompson, the defending heavyweight champion, overcame a disappointing loss to North Carolina's Justin Harty in the semifinals, and dropped Michigan's Airron Richardson and California-Bakersfield's Stephen Neal in the consolation round to post the third-place victory.

Tobin beat Iowa's Lee Fullhart

while Terry wrapped up third place with a victory of Fresno State's Alfonzo Tucker.

"For those guys to not reach the finals is distressing," Neumann said. "But I'm so proud of what they did."

Behind the three third-place finishers, Nebraska ended up fifth in

for Harty.

"Tolly was just out of it mentally," Neumann said. "He went out hard and wrestled like normal. Then he took a couple of headbutts and lost his composure."

"I told Tolly that Harty was trying to get him emotionally instead of wrestling him. In any sport, the mental aspect can destroy you or make you great. In this case, it beat us up."

Thompson said he had something to prove during his two-match run in the consolation that netted him a third-place finish.

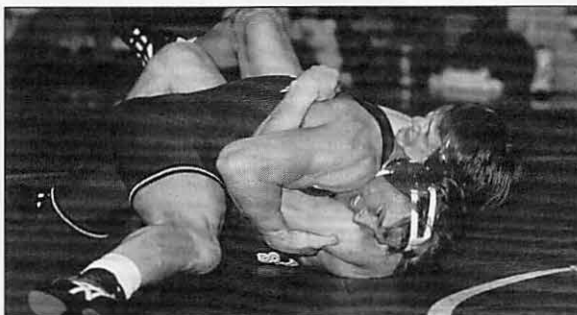
"It's either lay there and die or get back up and run or fly," he said. "He just got me in the

wing. It wasn't like he got me through the chest."

Tobin was defeated by top-seeded John Kading of Oklahoma, 8-2, in the semifinals. He came back to defeat two foes to finish the year at 33-9.

But perhaps the most inspira-

Defending heavyweight champion Tolly Thompson (top) was mentally beat as Ryan Tobin (center) lost out to top-seeded John Kading.



the team race with 51 points. Iowa won the meet, for the second-straight year, with 122.5 points.

The loss in the semifinals didn't kill Thompson, a junior from Janesville, Iowa. But it did hurt him a little.

North Carolina's Harty, the fifth seed, used two headbutts to Thompson's nose to get the defending champ's mind off the match at hand. The result was a 6-5 victory

tional performance came from Terry, the second seed who was forced into an injury default against Illinois' Ernest Benion in the semifinal match at 158. Terry separated his shoulder on three occasions during the match before it was halted with 1:24 remaining in the third period and with Terry trailing 7-3.

Terry, with the shoulder bandaged, didn't let the injury stop him. He took home third place with a 5-2 victory over Tucker of Fresno State. Terry wrapped up the victory with a takedown with just 10 seconds left in the match.

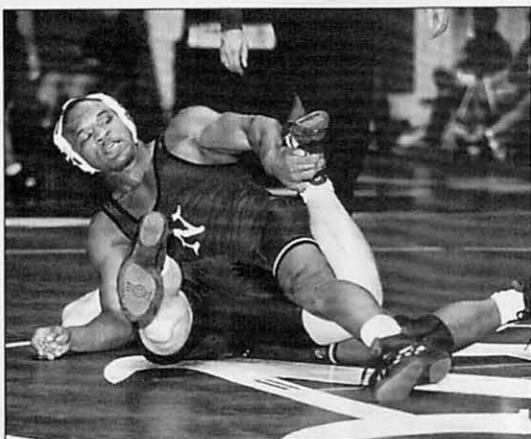
"I'm glad I was able to come back, but I didn't come here to take third," said Terry, a junior. "I wanted to win it."

Tobin and Terry will have to wait two years before they get another shot to win a national title. The two All-Americans will sit out next season as redshirts, Neumann said.

One other Husker also earned All-America honors, which go to the top eight wrestlers in each weight class. Senior Chad Nelson was defeated by Indiana's Mike Powell in the seventh-place match at 167 to earn the award.

Nelson is a fifth-year senior who was competing at the national meet for the first time. He ended the year with a 26-12 record.

Nelson overcame a first-round loss — when he was pinned by Gerald Carr of Minnesota — and worked his way back through the consolation round to finish eighth overall.



Temoer Terry was inspiring as he battled through three shoulder separations.

Nelson was one of five Huskers who lost in the first round, which all but eliminated Nebraska from the team race one day into the three-day meet.

Jeramie Welder (126), Brad Canoyer (118) and Tony DeAnda (134) all lost opening matches. DeAnda was seeded fifth, but he dropped a 12-5 decision to Kent's Brian Singleton. DeAnda was competing with an injured knee.

The biggest blow came when 177-

pounder Erik Josephson blew a 5-1 lead and lost a 8-6 decision in sudden-death overtime to Minnesota's Tim Hartung.

Josephson entered the meet ranked ninth in his weight division.

"Josephson got a four-point lead and decided he was going to sit on it," Neumann said. "You have to wrestle smart and intense the whole match."

"A couple of our guys thought an 80-percent effort would be enough to win. You'd think after five months of competition the coaching staff could make them realize what it takes."

Even without Terry and Tobin next season, the Huskers still return a talented cast.

Thompson will be a senior next year, while Canoyer and Welder should benefit from the addition experience gained at the NCAA Championships. Canoyer was an All-American as a freshman after he placed sixth at the national meet.

The Huskers will be deep, according to Neumann.

"In the past years I've looked around the wrestling room and saw maybe 12 or 13 guys that I thought were capable of being an All-American at some point in their career," he said. "I looked around at the start of practice this year and I counted 24 I think can be All-Americans or national champions. That's an awful lot." ■

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Joy Taylor will walk away from gymnastics at the end of this season. That won't be easy for the Nebraska senior from New Palestine, Ind. But the time has come, as she knew it would.

For the better part of 14 years, gymnastics "has been my main focus," Taylor said before winning the all-around title at the final Big Eight Conference championship meet in Ames, Iowa.

"It will be difficult. But I'm ready to move on with my life," she said.

Taylor, one of two seniors (Meghan Nicolini is the other) on a team that won Nebraska's third consecutive conference championship under third-year head coach Dan Kendig, is definitely well-prepared to move on with her life. She has achieved extraordinary success in the classroom. Her cumulative grade-point average is a perfect 4.0. Her major is biological sciences.

That might sound familiar to Nebraska football fans. Former Cornhusker offensive lineman Rob Zatechka, now employed by the NFL's New York Giants, also graduated with straight A's as a biological sciences major. Taylor just has to maintain perfection through the remainder of the semester.

"I wouldn't want to lose it now," she said.

Losing her 4.0 GPA is highly unlikely. The last time Taylor earned less than an A was when she was a sophomore in high school. For reasons she can't (or won't) explain, she received a B-plus in a driver's education class.

Getting straight A's "is not something I really thought about the first couple of years in school (at Nebraska)," said Taylor. "It comes from the study habits I've developed."

Apparently, those study habits have allowed for maximum use of her time.

"I don't think I study as much as some," she said.

On balance, she probably has devoted more time and energy to gymnastics training than to studying. In some ways, however, the two are complementary, which helps to explain why three other Husker women gymnasts have earned Academic All-America recognition since 1988.

Nicole Duval was a three-time Academic All-American from 1993 to 1995.

The list of Nebraska's academic all-conference honorees over the last 10 seasons takes up an entire column in the Husker media/recruiting guide. "Gymnastics takes a lot of concentration. You have to be very aware of what you're doing. There's a lot of discipline, and the work ethic carries over," said Taylor, who is certain to repeat as an Academic All-American.

Taylor's work ethic certainly has served her well in the gym. She is going out in style. She set a school record,

scoring 39.375, to win the all-around competition at the Big Eight Championships, after finishing in a fourth-place tie with teammate Shelly Bartlett at last year's conference meet.

Taylor also won the balance beam (9.85) and the vault (9.9) in Ames. Nebraska needed to win the vault competition in the final rotation in order to edge Iowa State, the host school, for the team title.

"The last few years, I've concentrated more on being an all-arounder," said Taylor, who considers the vault and the uneven bars to be her best events. The uneven bars also are her favorite.

"I've improved the most on the bars," she said.

Taylor began in organized gymnastics when she was 7 years old. She competed for the first time when she was 10. "I was flipping around the house, and my mom didn't want me to kill myself," she said. She continued to compete in clubs until Nebraska offered her a scholarship.

Intercollegiate gymnastics competition required some significant adjustments in the way she looked at the sport, Taylor said, because "club gymnastics isn't a team sport. It's individual."

This has been a busy semester for Taylor, not only because she is taking 14 credit hours but also because she is going through the complicated application process for medical school. She already has been accepted by the University of Nebraska Medical School in

Omaha and is waiting to hear from a couple of others.

In addition to everything else, Taylor has been busy attending to the myriad details of her wedding, which is set for August. "My mom is helping me with that," she said.

By then, her gymnastics career will be over. Taylor hopes her final competition will be at the NCAA Gymnastics Championships in Tuscaloosa, Ala., at the end of April. For that to happen, the Huskers had to perform well at the Midwest Regionals in Salt Lake City.

The Huskers qualified for the national meet last season, finishing 11th. Taylor, 33rd in the all-around competition, had Nebraska's highest individual finish. She tied for 15th in the uneven bars. "Our goal last season was just to make nationals," Taylor said. "This year, we're looking past that."

Nebraska's resolve was apparent not only in the dramatic victory at the conference meet but also the week before, when the Huskers scored a school-record 195.750 in winning a dual against Southern Utah at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. Taylor won the vault (9.850) and was second in the all-around competition with a score of 39.20. That held up as her personal best.

Final exams at Nebraska are scheduled for the week after the NCAA championship meet.

"I'll be studying in Tuscaloosa, I guess," she said. ■

Taylor Made

Senior Joy Taylor leaves gymnastics and her mark while helping Nebraska to its third-straight Big Eight Championship By Mike Babcock



The night before, the Nebraska basketball team had won the National Invitation Tournament, completing a remarkable five-game run that no one, reasonably, could have predicted.

Terrance Badgett, one of five seniors who helped the Cornhuskers roll through the tournament considered the significance of what he and his teammates had accomplished.

"It's a blessing," he said. "I'm very thankful for it. I was on the first (Nebraska) team to win the NIT. We had it in us."

The value of that success will be even greater for those players who return next season, according to Badgett. With the confidence it built, the 1996-97 Cornhuskers "are going to the NCAA and win a couple of games, get to the Sweet 16, maybe even the final eight. I guarantee it," he said.

Coach Danny Nee was looking to such a future when he accepted an NIT bid. Not everyone endorsed that acceptance, given the fact that Nebraska had lost 10 of its final 11 games, including nine in a row. Some, perhaps many, expected Nee to cut his losses, literally, and let the season end at 16-14.

But Nee had seen signs of rejuvenation in his team during the nine-game losing streak. After a nationally televised 81-71 loss against Kansas at Lawrence in mid-February, Badgett said, Nee kept telling his players: "We're almost there. We're almost there. We just couldn't finish it."

The Cornhuskers lost to Oklahoma in overtime, then played poorly in a loss at Colorado before snapping the streak with a 70-66 victory against Kansas State in the final regular-season game. Nee wanted to build on that glimmer of hope, and the NIT provided the opportunity to do so.

Even if Nebraska hadn't won the tournament, it could have benefitted from participating. The Cornhuskers were able to continue practicing as well as playing. Their season was extended, as it worked out, by five games. The season's 35-game total was the most-ever at Nebraska.

The extension of the season allowed time to overcome the divisiveness and lack of communication that had led to nine players boycotting practice and meeting with Athletic Director Bill Byrne.

NIT Photos by Chris Fayok



NIT MVP Erick Strickland cuts down the nets at Madison Square Garden following Nebraska's win over St. Joseph's.

GARDEN PARTY

An unexpected NIT Championship has breathed new life into the Husker program • Mike Babcock

Badgett was among the nine. "I questioned that a lot," he said. "I wish it didn't happen like that. It bothered me. It hurt. I couldn't think about anything else. I couldn't concentrate."

From that adversity, something positive was salvaged. By the time the Cornhuskers began play in the NIT, the tension was lifting, though it wasn't gone completely until later

in the run, if then. "We were more relaxed," said Badgett. "Coach Nee was like a friend. Everybody appreciated that."

Because they played four of their five NIT games away from the Devaney Sports Center, the Cornhuskers spent considerable time together off the court as well as on.

"It was great. We had a great time



in New York," Badgett said.

Those who return next season are bound to benefit from that.

Despite the departure of Badgett, Erick Strickland, Jaron Boone, Tom Wald and Jason Glock, Nee will have the nucleus of a solid team, including an experienced point guard in Tyrone Lue.

Starters Bernard Garner and Mikki Moore return, along with top reserves Venson Hamilton and Andy Markowski. Chad Ideus and Chester Surles also are expected to return.

Leif Nelson was granted an unconditional release following the season.

In addition, Nee will get a boost from Larry Florence, Alvin Mitchell and Troy Piatkowski, all of whom are gaining their eligibility this year after not meeting NCAA freshman eligibility

requirements, and Segado "Cookie" Belcher, a prize scholarship recruit from Mexico, Mo. — and Lue's cousin. At press time, Nebraska was still looking to fill two scholarships for next season.

The Cornhuskers already have a step up on their 1997 recruiting class. In early April, Brant Harriman, a 6-foot-11 center from Mason City,

Iowa, announced his intention to sign a letter of intent with Nebraska. Harriman is a high school junior, which means the earliest he could sign a letter of intent would be next November. Even though Harriman's oral commitment isn't binding, he held a news conference to announce it, indicating the extent of his interest in the Cornhuskers. Although such early decisions are uncommon, Ideus made a similar announcement during his junior year at Adams, Neb., High School.

"I wanted to focus on school and my senior year in basketball," Harriman told the *Omaha World-Herald* by way of explanation. "I didn't want to be pressured into a decision." Harriman, a left-hander who averaged 16 points and 10.8 rebounds as a junior, visited Nebraska in early February, near the beginning of the nine-game losing streak. Obviously, he wasn't put off by the Cornhuskers' problems. "I just fell in love with Nebraska. I loved the school, the athletic facilities and the coaches."

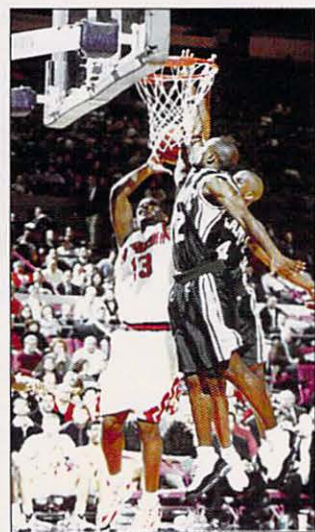
Harriman's announcement would seem to indicate that Nee's program survived the ordeal of this three-part season. Without a doubt, winning the NIT contributed to its survival.

The benefits far exceeded the risks. Instead of ending in disaster, the 1995-96 season ended in success. Nebraska finished No. 41 in the final Sagarin/USA Today computer rankings. Even allowing for a degree of error, the Cornhuskers were good enough to have been in the NCAA Tournament field.

No one would have accepted such an assessment if Nee had turned down the NIT.

The benefits will continue into 1996-97 — and, perhaps, beyond. ■

As Nee helped lift the tension on the team, forward Bernard Garner took his game to another level against Tulane.



Nebraska left its regular-season losing streak behind as it went on a tear through the NIT Tournament to the title

Lightning In A Bottle

Even though Nebraska had just lost to second-seeded Iowa State in the first round of the Big Eight Tournament at Kemper Arena in Kansas City, head coach Danny Nee told his players the season wasn't over. "We're going to the NIT," he said. "And we're going to win it, no matter what you think."

That the Cornhuskers would be among the 32 teams getting invitations to participate in the NIT was almost as unlikely as their winning it. They had just lost for the 10th time in 11 games.

But Nee was adamant that Nebraska would be invited. And he was equally adamant that once in, the Cornhuskers would win the championship, something they had never done.

By halftime of a 91-83 first-round victory against Colorado State at Fort Collins, Colo., most of his teammates had begun to believe.

It was a remarkable run, like no other in a century of Nebraska basketball. "For three weeks, we caught lightning in a bottle," Nee said.

Here, briefly, are the five strikes the Cornhuskers captured.

Game No. 1: Colorado State, 91-83

Nebraska trailed 45-39 at halftime, after falling behind by as many as 11 points, much to the delight of a crowd of 7,261 at Moby Arena in Fort Collins. Nebraska didn't get the lead until just over six minutes into the second half, when a Tyrone Lue layup made the score 60-58.

The Cornhuskers, who made only 38.7 percent from the field during the first half, sizzled in the second, hitting 64.3 percent to finish at 50.8. Included in that percentage was a season-high 10-of-17 from three-point range.

Nebraska's scoring was balanced. Erick Strickland led seven Cornhuskers in double-figures with 19 points. Jaron Boone contributed 15 points.

Game No. 2: Washington State, 82-73

The Cornhuskers returned home and drew a crowd of 9,037 to the Devaney Sports Center.

Washington State coach Kevin Eastman was sufficiently impressed by Nebraska's play to describe the Cornhuskers as "the second-best team we've played all year." The first, Eastman said, was Pac-10 power Arizona.

Nebraska shot 58.8 percent from the field, the second-highest percentage of the season. Washington State rallied from a 47-37 halftime deficit to cut the lead to 74-73. But the Cornhuskers scored the game's final eight points, including six by senior Tom Wald (four of which were free throws).

Strickland scored 18 points. Bernard Garner added 16 points. Freshman Venson Hamilton came off the bench to pull down 12 rebounds.

Game No. 3: Fresno State, 83-71

Nee had indicated Nebraska preferred to go on the road for its first game in the NIT. His hope was that Nebraska then would get two home games. But the NIT and the ESPN cable television network seemed deter-

mined to get Fresno State, and more specifically coach Jerry Tarkanian, into the semifinals at Madison Square Garden.

The Bulldogs, who had won 15 consecutive home games, were allowed to remain there for a third in a row during the NIT. Fresno State took an early 13-point lead, but Nebraska scored 14 unanswered points to take a 45-40 halftime lead. The Bulldogs could get no closer than five (67-62) in the second half.

Game No. 4: Tulane, 90-78

Nebraska turned over the ball 25 times and still won by



Chris Fayot
Mikki Moore made the all-tournament team with 13 points and 13 rebounds in the final game.

12 against a Tulane team that some thought should have been given an at-large bid into the NCAA Tournament.

Nebraska shot 57.4 percent from the field and never trailed, though the Green Wave did tie the game at 50 with 16:23 remaining. Nebraska then went on a 7-0 run, initiated by Lue's three-point shot, to regain control of its 20th victory. There have been only eight other 20-win seasons in Nebraska history.

Tulane rallied one more time, with help from Cornhusker turnovers, going on a 9-0 run to cut Nebraska's lead to 71-68 with 5:40 remaining. But again, Nebraska regrouped to advance to the finals. Strickland and Garner each scored 20 points. Lue scored 15. And Hamilton, whose playing increased because of early foul trouble for Moore, contributed 13 points and nine rebounds.

Game No. 5: St. Joseph's, 60-56

A crowd of more than 13,000 at Madison Square Garden, including coaches and media in New York for the NCAA Final Four at the New Jersey Meadowlands watched Nebraska beat the Hawks at their own game.

Nebraska played tenacious defense, led by Strickland, who limited Mark Bass, St. Joseph's leading scorer on the season, to three points. Bass made 1-of-11 shots from the field.

Terrell Myers, who averaged double-figure scoring off the bench, was similarly ineffective against Strickland, hitting only 2-of-11, including 1-of-6 from three-point range.

Nebraska had its poorest shooting effort of the NIT — 44.2 percent. But St. Joseph's, which had forced Atlantic 10 Conference rival Massachusetts into overtime twice, shot only 32.3 percent.

Strickland, who was chosen as the tournament's most valuable player, scored 13 points, grabbed six rebounds and made three steals. Moore, Boone and Lue, who joined Strickland on the all-tournament team, each scored 11 points. Moore pulled down 13 rebounds. Lue and Boone each contributed four assists. ■

A

ngela Beck regarded her Nebraska basketball team's 66-62 loss to Colorado State in the first round of the NCAA West Regional at Palo Alto, Calif., as an indication of what could be.

"We fought hard," she said. "That shows me we have a good future."

The Huskers, playing in their third NCAA Tournament (all under Beck) rallied from a 33-24 halftime deficit against Colorado State to take the lead at 58-57 on a three-point shot by senior Kate Galligan with just over two minutes remaining. The Rams, champions of the Western Athletic Conference, needed two free throws with 20 seconds left to ensure their 26th victory.

Only then was it certain that Nebraska would finish the season with a 19-10 record. "It's a disappointing loss, but I like the direction we're going," Beck said. Again, her focus was the future.

The Huskers will lose three seniors, all of them starters: Pyra Aarden, Galligan and Lis Brenden. But their top two scorers, Anna DeForge and Tina McClain, will return, along with the first three players off the bench most of the season: Jami Kubik, LaToya Doage and Kate Benson.

In addition, Beck signed four players during the NCAA's early-signing period, including three from Nebraska high schools: Nicole Kubik (Jami's sister) from Cambridge, Brooke Schwartz from Gering and Charlie Rogers from South Sioux City. The fourth is 6-foot-1 Oklahoma native Nasicka Gilmore.

Schwartz could play right away, at point guard, Brenden's position. Beck was still looking to recruit an inside player, possibly from the junior college ranks, capable of contributing immediately.

The 1995-96 team was her favorite, said Beck, who produced a dramatic turnaround in her 10th season. The 1994-95 Huskers finished 13-14, including 4-10 in the Big Eight. It was only the second losing season at Nebraska for Beck — and just the third with a losing record in the conference.

The Huskers finished 8-6 in the Big Eight's final season, good for a third-place tie. They reached the semifinals of the conference tournament at Salina, Kan., defeating Missouri, 70-64, in the first round, then losing to regular-season champion Kansas, 65-61. DeForge was an all-tournament pick.

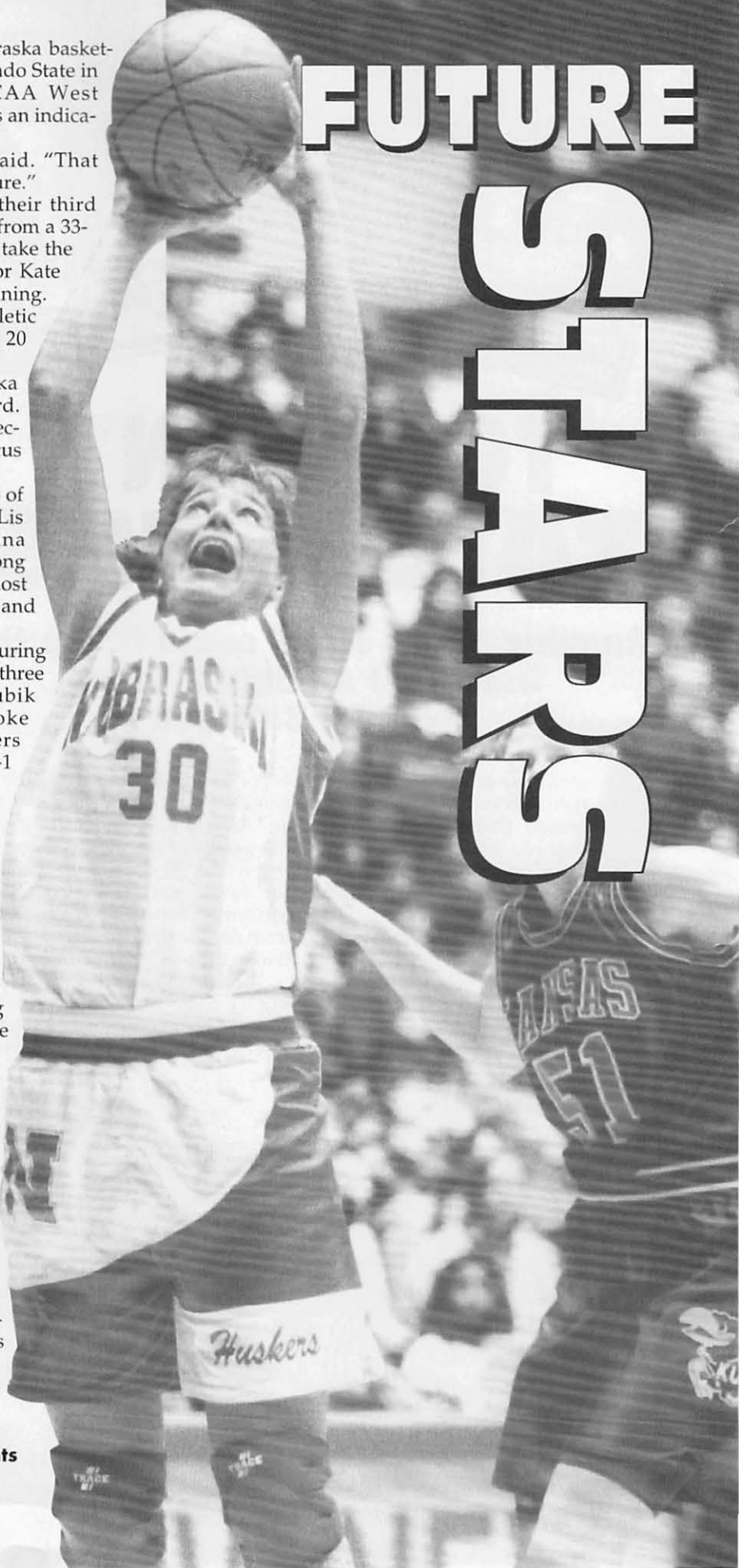
DeForge, who averaged 14.5 points per game, will be a junior next season, as will Jami Kubik, Thompson and Kate McEwen. McClain, who averaged 13.8 points per game and was a second-team All-Big Eight selection, will be one of three seniors. The others are Doage and Sheila McPherson.

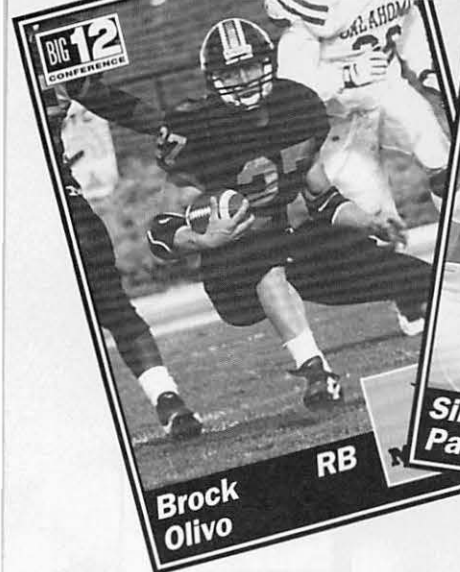
Benson and Cori McDill will be sophomores, giving Beck a good mix. ■

FUTURE

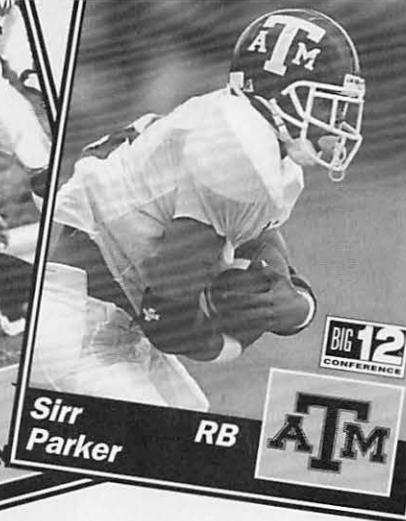
STARS

Anna DeForge, who averaged 14.5 points a game this year, will be counted on to direct the team in the 1996-97 season.





Brock Olivo RB



Sirr Parker RB



Troy Davis RB



Mike Lawrence RB

TOO MANY TAILBACKS

Running backs alone could fill up the inaugural All-Big 12 team

By Mike Babcock

Iowa State ranked ninth in the nation in rushing offense last season, thanks to the strong legs and durability of sophomore tailback Troy Davis. The Cyclones ranked 108th in rushing defense.

Metaphorically speaking, Iowa State tried to live by the sword. Without a doubt, the Cyclones died by it. There were only 108 teams in the NCAA's Division I-A last season. In other words, no

major college defense was more vulnerable to the run. Opponents averaged just under 300 rushing yards per game against the Cyclones. That is a matter of considerable concern for Iowa State head coach Dan McCarney as he prepares his second team for the first season of competition in the newly formed Big 12.

"The first thing we must do in the Big 12 is be physical against the run," McCarney said before the Cyclones began spring practice in

late March. "Look at the teams on our schedule — the great teams run the football. Winning at this level starts with dominating people at the line of scrimmage."

That such an offensive philosophy could be characteristic of the Big 12 can be seen in the number of 1,000-yard rushers who will be playing for conference teams this season. The task of selecting running backs for the 1996 All-Big 12 first team will be sizable, given the number of talented young ball carriers on the Big Eight teams and the four Southwest Conference teams that have created the Big 12.

Davis was easily the most impressive, rushing for 2,010 yards. But five other Big 12 running backs gained 1,000 or more yards last season: Oklahoma State's David Thompson (1,509), Texas Tech's Byron Hanspard (1,374), Baylor's Jerod Douglas (1,114), Texas' Shon Mitchell (1,099) and Nebraska's Ahman Green (1,096). In addition, Texas' Ricky Williams (990) and



Marlon Barnes RB



Byron Hanspard RB



Jerod Douglas RB



Eric Hickson RB

★ Newcomer of the Year ★



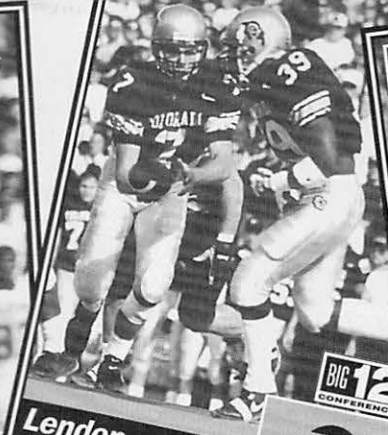
Ahman Green RB



Southwest Conference
★ Freshman of the Year ★



Ricky Williams RB



Lendon Henry RB



June Henley RB



Missouri's Brock Olivo (986) came oh-so-close. Plus, Colorado's Herchell Troutman (826) and Kansas State's Eric Hickson (816) might have reached 1,000 had they not shared playing time with some comparably talented teammates.

Troutman is one-third of what Colorado describes as its "Thoroughbred Trio." The other two-thirds are Lendon Henry (463) and Marlon Barnes (444). Hickson alternated with Mike Lawrence (599) to give pass-oriented Kansas State its best rushing offense in 13 years. Lawrence also returns.

Even though Kansas State still ranked last in the Big Eight in rushing offense a year ago, the Hickson-Lawrence combination provided a running threat that took pressure off the quarterback. For example, Hickson and Lawrence each rushed for 100-plus yards as the Wildcats ran for a season-high 335 in a surprisingly easy 41-7 victory against arch-rival Kansas. The Jayhawks rushed for only 19 yards. "I didn't

think anybody could shut our offense down like that," Kansas coach Glen Mason said.

Mason's offensive philosophy has been shaped by his association with the late Woody Hayes at Ohio State. When he arrived at Kansas, the Jayhawks were last in the Big Eight in rushing. Since then, he has worked and recruited to develop a running game, acknowledging the same fact McCarney has.

Mason might have taken it too far, however. Before last season, he realized he needed balance. "Our problem has been people who stop the run by putting eight, nine or 10 people up by the line of scrimmage," he told reporters in Kansas City, Mo., before the season.

"We haven't been able to throw effectively. So we're changing. In spots in the past where you expected us to run, we might pass. We've worked hard on it," Mason said.

The Jayhawks still relied heavily on the run. June Henley and L.T. Levine combined to rushed for 1,607

yards and 16 touchdowns. Levine has completed his eligibility. Henley, however, is back.

A conference's offensive identity usually comes from its most successful programs, and the Big 12's best, including two-time defending national champion Nebraska, are committed to the run.

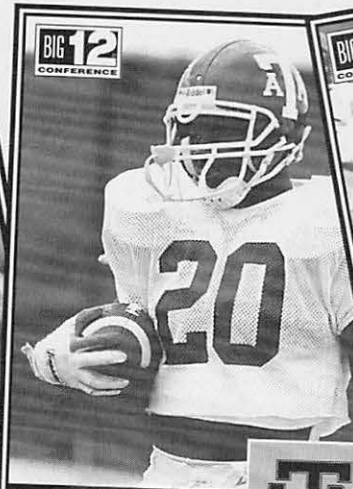
Cornhusker Coach Tom Osborne's firm belief in the run-oriented option-I is well-documented. Nebraska has a tradition of outstanding I-backs, the latest of whom is Green. Green who established Cornhusker records for rushing and all-purpose yards (1,259) by a freshman last season. One of the fastest players in Nebraska history, he started six games and was chosen as the Big Eight's offensive newcomer of the year by both the *Associated Press* and the conference coaches.

Green was one of only three freshmen to rush for 1,000 or more yards last season. With 10 more yards, Williams would have reached that plateau and given Texas its first

Southwest Conference
★ Newcomer of the Year ★



Shon Mitchell RB



D'Andre Hardeman RB



Herchell Troutman RB



David Thompson RB



★ First Team All-Big Eight ★

1,000-yard duo in history. As it was, he set a school rushing record for a freshman.

Williams combined with Mitchell, a transfer from Blinn Junior College, to run for 2,089 yards, the second-best, two-back total in Longhorn history. Earl Campbell (1,744) and Johnny "Ham" Jones (489) gained 2,233 yards between them in 1977.

Tech's Hanspard led the Southwest Conference in rushing yards, on the strength of a remarkable finish. The junior-to-be from

Hanspard, Douglas and Texas A&M's Leeland McElroy were the All-SWC first-team running backs last season.

McElroy has moved on, but the Aggies have highly regarded replacements in Sirr Parker and D'Andre Hardeman, both of whom played last season as true freshmen.

Hardeman, from Galena Park, Texas, started against SMU because McElroy was injured. Hardeman took advantage of the McElroy injury and ran for 130 yards on 26 carries. Parker, who has been compared to former Oklahoma speedster Joe Washington, contributed 146 yards rushing and receiving in the SMU game. Parker is a rare Aggie "import," coming from Locke High School in Los Angeles.

Davis, Thompson and Green earned first-team all-conference honors in the Big Eight. Davis was a first-team selection by both the *Associated Press* and the conference coaches. Thompson was the other running back on the AP first team. Green was first-team according to the Big Eight coaches.

Thompson, a senior-to-be from Okmulgee, Okla., is the latest on the list of outstanding Oklahoma State running

backs, among them Thurman Thomas and 1988 Heisman Trophy winner Barry Sanders. He and Andre Richardson, who will be a junior, combined for 2,214 rushing yards in 12 games.

Only two rushers gained 100 or more yards against Nebraska last season: Thompson, who ran for 128 yards and one touchdown on 16 carries in the season-opener, and Davis,

who managed 121 yards on 28 carries against a "bubble" defense, designed specifically to contain him.

Iowa State recruited Davis from Southridge High in Miami, where he was *USA Today's* prep player of the year in Florida in 1993. As a senior, he rushed for 2,234 yards and a Dade County-record 34 touchdowns. The previous record was held by Emmitt Smith.

Even so, his sophomore season was something of a surprise. As a freshman, he carried only 35 times for 187 yards. His lone touchdown came on a school-record 99-yard kickoff return.

Two others among the top 10 returning running backs in the Big 12 are from Florida: Colorado's Troutman, who is from Naples, and Kansas State's Hickson, who is from Fort Lauderdale. Hickson's running mate, Lawrence, also is a Floridian, from Carol City.

Hanspard, Douglas and Mitchell all are from Texas, which produces an abundance of top high school running backs. Douglas comes from Converse; Mitchell from Austin.

Douglas might have been overlooked last season, not necessarily because of his size (5-foot-9, 173 pounds) but rather because of the attention focused on McElroy and Hanspard. Douglas was outstanding as a sophomore. He very well could have broken Baylor's single-season rushing record had he not suffered a severe heel injury and been forced to miss the second half of the Bears' final game against Texas. He needed 74 more yards — he already had rushed for 72 yards when he was injured.

Douglas proved his versatility by averaging a school-record 33.3 yards per return on 30 kickoff returns. He also caught 12 passes for 81 yards to



Chris Foyt

Troy Davis finished third in the Heisman Trophy race last year. If he survives the Big 12 rushing race, he could find himself the Heisman winner in 1996.

DeSoto, Texas, rushed for 668 yards in the final three regular-season games. Hanspard then capped his sophomore season by rushing for 260 yards and scoring four touchdowns in a 55-41 victory against Air Force in the Copper Bowl.

Hanspard's 1,374 rushing yards were the second-most by a sophomore in Southwest Conference history, behind only Texas A&M's Darren Lewis. Hanspard also led the Red Raiders in pass receiving, with 35 catches for 474 yards and seven touchdowns.

"He has a great work ethic and tons of athletic ability," said Tech Coach Spike Dykes. "He's really mature. He's a great leader."

Despite being a sophomore, Hanspard was elected as a team captain last season.

In addition to everything else, "he's an excellent, high-percentage blocker," Dykes said.

The Big 12 of the Big 12

Twelve running backs distinguish the Big 12 as the nation's premier rushing conference

Player	School	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	Hometown	1995 Totals
Troy Davis	Iowa State	5-5	180	Jr.	Miami, Fla.	2,010
David Thompson	Oklahoma State	5-8	200	Sr.	Okmulgee, Okla.	1,509
Byron Hanspard	Texas Tech	6-0	190	Jr.	DeSoto, Texas	1,374
Jerod Douglas	Baylor	5-9	173	Jr.	Converse, Texas	1,114
Shon Mitchell	Texas	5-10	185	Sr.	Austin, Texas	1,099
Ahman Green	Nebraska	6-0	210	So.	Omaha, Neb.	1,086
Ricky Williams	Texas	6-0	215	So.	San Diego, Calif.	990
Brock Olivo	Missouri	6-1	205	Jr.	Washington, Mo.	985
Herchell Troutman	Colorado	5-7	180	Jr.	Naples, Fla.	826
Eric Hickson	Kansas State	5-10	195	Jr.	Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	816
Mike Lawrence	Kansas State	5-9	190	Jr.	Carol City, Fla.	599
Lendon Henry	Colorado	6-0	180	Jr.	Port Arthur, Texas	463

set a school record for all-purpose yards.

Douglas won't be able to rest on his accomplishments this season, however. Baylor recruited two of the nation's top high school running backs, both from Texas: Elijah Burkins from Port Arthur and Darrell Bush from Jersey Village. Burkins broke Joe Washington's city rushing records, playing at Jefferson High. Bush finished as the No. 2 career rusher in Texas 5A history. Douglas is No. 1.

Colorado's 1996 recruiting class included No. 3, Ryan Nunez from Austin Westlake. Nunez, who is credited with 4.32 speed in the 40-yard dash, could end up as a wide receiver.

Nebraska landed DeAngelo Evans from Collegiate High in Wichita, Kan., rated as the top running back recruit in the Big 12 area by analyst James Hale. Evans broke Barry Sanders' high school rushing records in Wichita, gaining 8,473 yards and scoring 131 touchdowns during his remarkable career. He achieved those totals despite playing only six games as a senior because of an ankle injury.

Like Green, Evans will be given an opportunity to play without red-shirting. "Maybe DeAngelo Evans will give us a shot in the arm this fall like Ahman Green did for us last year," Osborne said recently.

Evans stands 5-9 and weighs 210 pounds. He has 4.35 speed in the 40-yard dash, a 40-inch vertical jump and extraordinary strength — he can bench press 355 pounds.

All of the Big 12's premier running backs combine such speed and power. And, for the most part, they run behind huge offensive linemen. That fact can't be ignored in explaining their success. Dealing with the run requires not only sound defensive schemes but also physical defenders.

"This year, we will be lining up with linebackers who are in the 230- to 240-pound class, giving us a better chance to stop the run," Iowa State's McCarney said. "We want to develop kids on our defense that know you have to stop the run first and are physical enough to do it."

The former is much easier than the latter. Every Big 12 team has a running back or two capable of gaining 100 yards in a given game. Picking the two or three best for the all-conference team at season's end will be almost as big of a chore as devising ways of stopping them. ■

Green No More

Nebraska has never had a freshman I-back play as well as Ahman Green did last season.

That came as no great surprise, considering the resume Green compiled at Central High in Omaha.

Even so, "we toyed with whether we were going to red-shirt Ahman Green, for a long time," coach Tom Osborne said. "The way things broke with (Lawrence) Phillips and injuries, he ended up playing a whole bunch."

Although Osborne and assistant head coach Frank Solich, who handles the running backs, might have thought long and hard about red-shirting Green, their public stance was that he would be given every opportunity to play immediately. Rarely, if ever, has a freshman arrived with such praise.

Green was exactly as advertised. He started six games and rushed for 100 or more yards in five games. He finished with 1,086 yards, the most by a Husker freshman.

He scored 16 touchdowns. He set a Cornhusker freshman record for all-purpose yardage. And he was chosen as the conference Offensive Newcomer of the Year.

Green contributed significantly to Nebraska's second consecutive NCAA rushing title, and its sixth in the last eight seasons. The Huskers averaged 399.8 rushing yards per game, the second-highest total in school history. The school record (401.7) was set in 1983 — Green was 6-years-old then.

Despite the departure of Phillips for the NFL, "I feel this offense can be as potent as last year's," Green said after rushing for 54 yards on seven carries in the second Saturday scrimmage of the spring.

That's assuming he and the other I-backs can remain healthy. Green sat out the spring's first Saturday scrimmage with sore quadriceps, and junior James Sims, the No. 5 I-back last season, was hobbled by a hamstring pull, further depleting the position's depth.

Osborne was understandably

Despite being understaffed, Ahman Green leads a talented group of I-backs



Ahman Green proved he could be step in as Nebraska's No. 1 back with his stellar freshman season.

concerned. Depth is critical at I-back. "We don't have as many guys in the picture this year as last year," he said.

Even with Green, Sims and Damon Benning healthy, the Cornhuskers probably will need another quality I-back or two, which means incoming freshmen DeAngelo Evans and Robert Pollard will get a good look.

Pollard, from Orange Park, Fla., was rated as the nation's No. 2 strong safety by one recruiting analyst, and it appeared he might be destined for defense. But he'll begin as an I-back, Solich said.

In any case, Green will be better than a year ago. The value of a season's experience is inestimable, particularly for a young player. The transition from high school to college is much more difficult than the transition from a player's freshman year to his sophomore year.

Green hasn't slacked off. He scored the third-highest point total ever on the Cornhuskers' performance index in post-winter conditioning — behind Sims and former defensive back Curtis Cotton. And he did so without equaling his best time in the 40-yard dash. He was a step off, at 4.45.

Put another way, Green ran 4.45 on a "slow" day. That's how talented he is. ■

Going The Distance

Medley relay team has best finish since 1966 and wins national title

Nebraska's best finish at the NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships left the Husker men's team wondering about what may have been.

The Huskers, led by junior distance runner Jonah Kiptarus, rallied after a slow start to place second in the team race during the two-day national championship meet held at the RCA Dome in Indianapolis.

Nebraska scored 31.5 points, second only to George Mason, which won the meet with 39.

Kiptarus, a transfer from Barton County (Kan.) Community College, placed second in the mile with a time of 4:03.59 seconds.

Two hours later, Kiptarus helped the Husker distance medley relay team to a national championship.

The foursome of Alex Lamme, Miklos Roth, Balazs Tolgyesi and Kiptarus won the race in a school and Big Eight Conference record time of 9:32.13.

It was the best finish by a Husker men's team at the national indoor meet since the 1966 squad placed third.

"That's terrific considering the rugged start we had," Nebraska coach Gary Pepin said. "I didn't know if we'd be able to

rebound from it. The DMR was super, and little Jonah had a terrific day."

Kiptarus, a native of Kenya, led in the mile for much of the race before George Mason's Julius Achon grabbed the lead with a little more than 400 meters remaining in the race.

The Husker women — behind national individual titles by triple jumper Nicola Martial and long jumper Angee Henry — tied for fourth in the team race with 28 points. LSU won the title with a score of 52.

Martial, a senior from Las Vegas, waited until the last possible moment to win her first indoor national championship in the triple jump. On her final attempt of the competition, she came through with a jump that measured 44 feet, 8 1/4 inches to overtake LSU's Suzette Lee for top honors. ■ — Mark Derowitsch

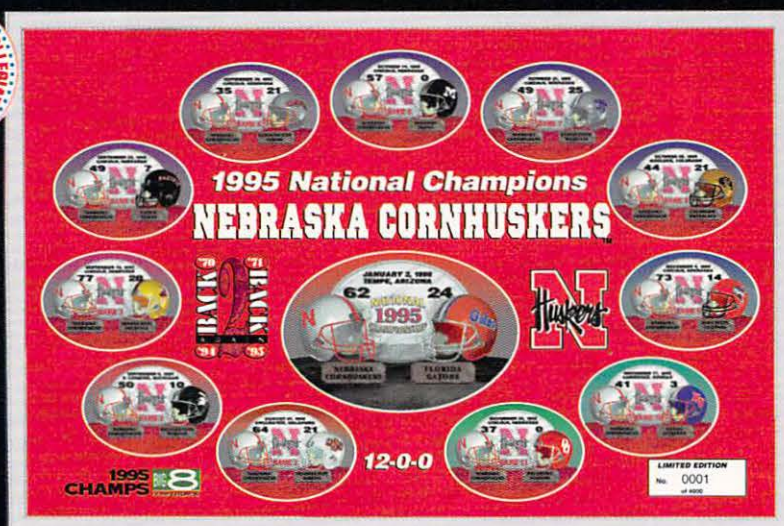


Balazs Tolgyesi helped pace the Huskers to their national title.

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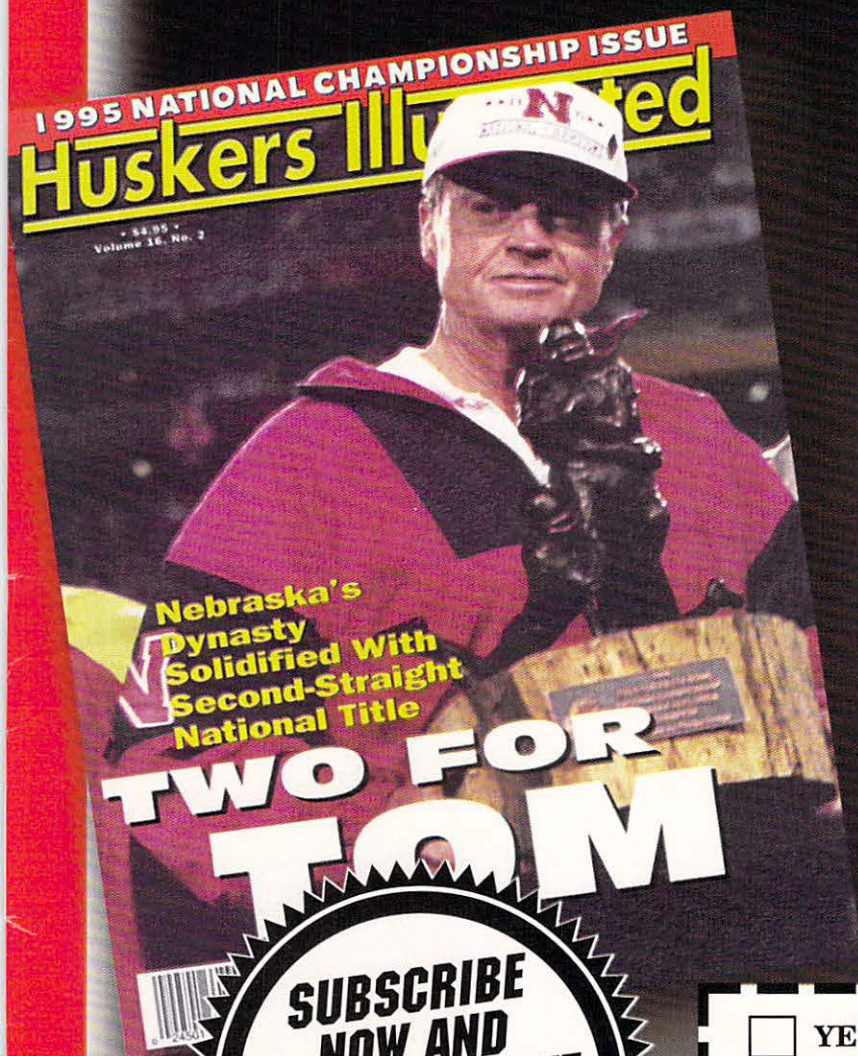
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